The UNESCO Courier

A window open on the world

October 1971 (24th year) - Price : 50 cents

IRAN

cultural crossroads for 2,500 years

XUM

Photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

TREASURES
OF
WORLD ART

59 *Iran*

Fabulous bird-woman

This strange creature, half-bird, half-woman, is an extremely rare piece of lustre-painted Iranian pottery, standing over 2 ft. high, fashioned nearly 800 years ago at Ray, near Teheran. These mythological beings were traditional in Moslem iconography, but ordinarily appeared only as part of a decorative motif on ceramics, metalware and textiles. The same fantastic beasts, known as harpies, figure in ancient Greek lore as wind spirits or sirens. This imposing ceramic dates from the Middle Islamic period of Iranian ceramics, when the city of Ray was renowned for the wares of its skilled and inventive potters.

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Cover

This majestic countenance, detail of a human-headed bull crowning a column, was carved in the 5th century B.C. It is one of the innumerable sculptured figures that adorned the palaces and halls of Persepolis, capital of the Persian Empire, nearly 2,500 years ago, under Darius I.

Photo © Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, U.S.A.

XUM

View of the ruins of Persepolis, the royal city created by Darius I, its massive carvings, gateways and walls recalling the splendours of ancient Persia. 2,500 years ago ritual processions trod this ceremonial stairway leading to the palaces and audience halls of Persepolis.

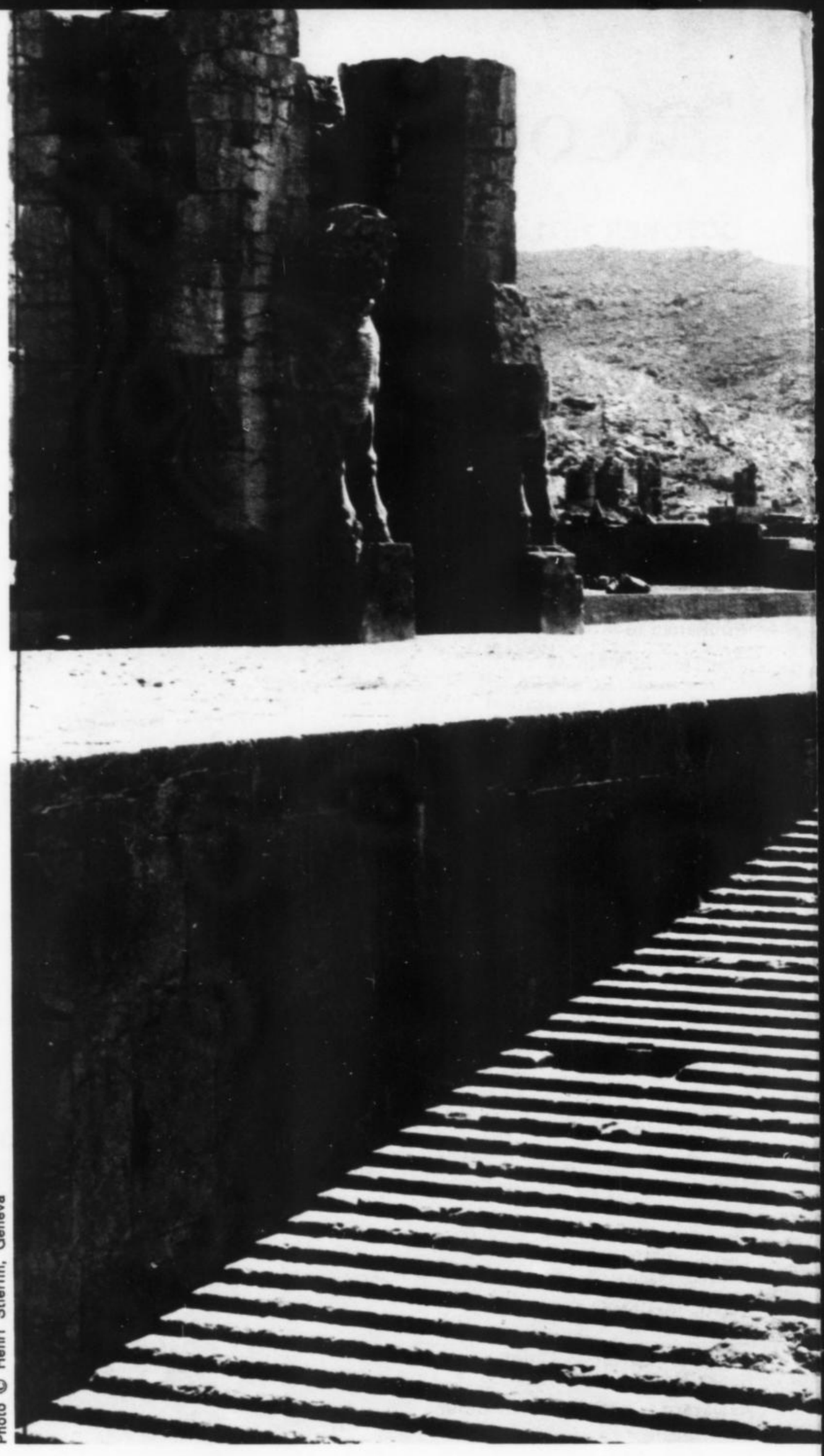

Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

This issue of the "Unesco Courier" is published to mark an important date: the 2,500th anniversary of the founding of Iran. Unesco's General Conference, recognizing the importance of Iranian civilization in world history and its "links with other civilizations over a period of twenty-five centuries", last year adopted a resolution calling on Unesco and its Member States to co-operate with the Iranian authorities in this commemoration. The Editors hope that the presentation in this issue of a few of the features of Iranian culture and civilization —brief and incomplete though they may be— will help to spark a more profound interest in the great traditions of Persia which are as alive today as they were two millennia ago.

IRAN cultural crossroads for 2,500 years

by Peter Avery

WITHOUT the genius of Iran the culture of mankind would have been exceedingly impoverished. Between 546 and 331 B.C. the great Achaemenid Empire, built by Cyrus and consolidated by Darius (521-486 B.C.), continued and perfected, on a far larger scale than had ever been

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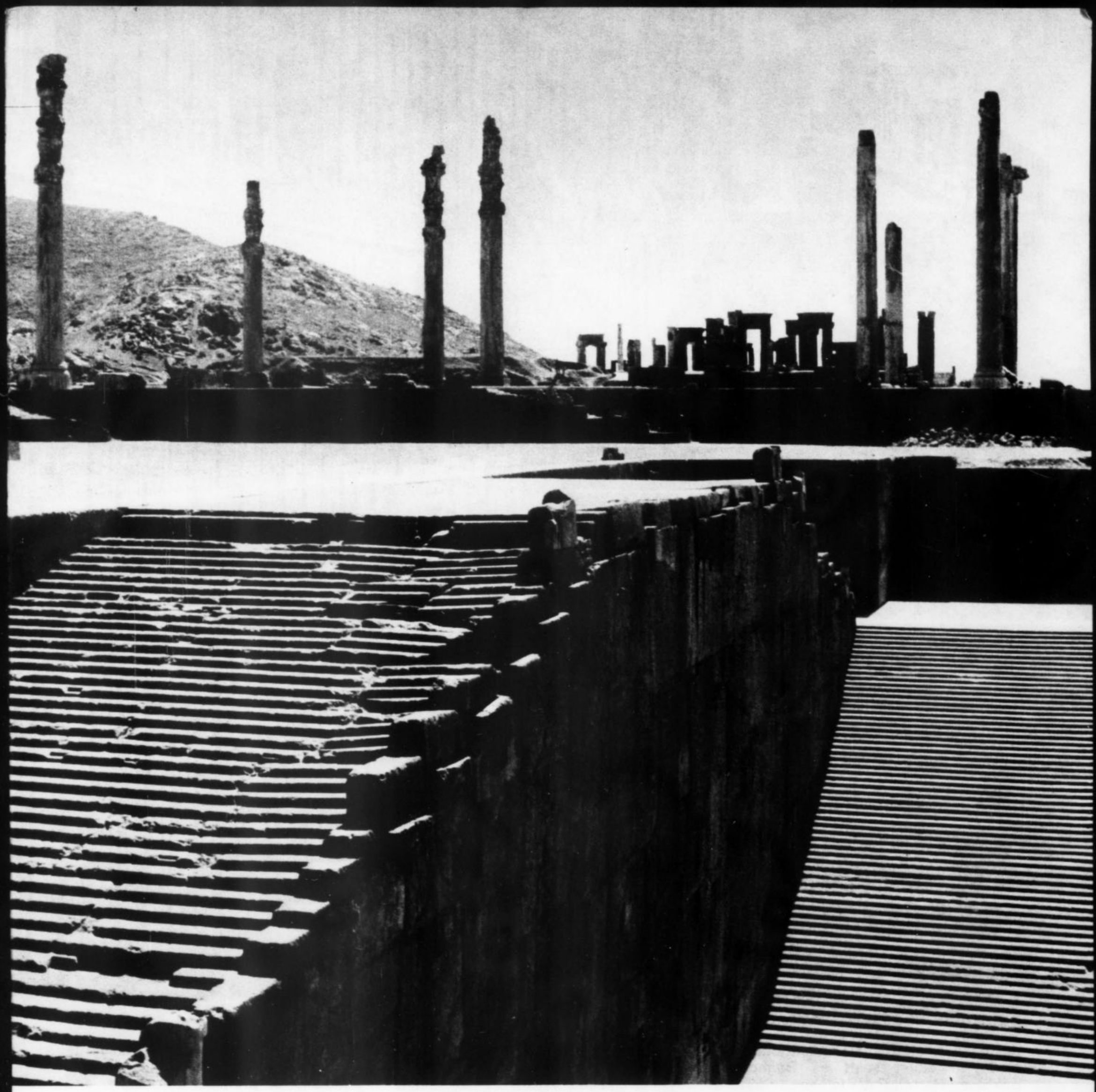
PETER AVERY *is lecturer in Persian at the University of Cambridge, where he was dean of King's College in 1967-68. Among his many books on Iran are "Modern Iran", "Persia, 600-1800", "Hafiz of Shiraz, Thirty Poems" (with John Heath Stubbs), and several volumes of the "Cambridge History of Iran" (as editor).*



known, the ordering and interchanges of an imperial state whose beginnings had been traced by the Babylonians and Assyrians.

Once the latter had been conquered by the Iranians, the "law of the Medes and Persians which changeth not" sheltered the development of civilization from the Aegean Sea to the Indian Ocean.

Significantly, the Acheamenids supplied their own word for "law", *dàtà*, which passed into Armenian, Hebrew and Akkadian, to signify what is meant by its root meaning, "to arrange" or "put in order".

The ancient languages which adopted this word indicate the Achaemenid Empire's dominance over an area which included the Caucasus and Armenia, Israel on the Mediterranean seabord, and the Tigris-Euphrates Basin. It also stretched into Central Asia in the northeast, and Asia Minor in the west.

From the crossroads the Medes and then the men of Persis, Cyrus and Darius, marched along routes which quartered the compass, to create the model of the universal, cosmopolitan state.

During the reign of Artaxerxes I (466-424 B.C.) Greek historians and men of science travelled in the Empire to acquire the learning of the East. Had Democritus (d. 361 B.C.) not met Babylonian scholars and mathematicians under the aegis of the Achaemenid Empire, he would probably not have worked out his atomic theory. His father had entertained the Emperor Xerxes when the Iranian "Great King" had been in Thrace in about 460 B.C.

Leaving those ancient eras when Iran set the style for uniting nations, the more recent Islamic culture can be cited as a phenomenon which would

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CULTURAL CROSSROADS *(Continued)*

not have existed without contributions made in cities such as Baghdad, Bukhara, Herat, Ray, Isfahan, Shiraz and Tabriz from the 8th to the 17th centuries A.D. There the poetry, faïence, architecture, metalwork, miniature painting and calligraphy which are the characteristic adornments of Moslem culture were perfected.

The ethos of all these cities was Iranian, so extensive had former Persian empires been. Baghdad, from 750 to 1258 the seat of the Caliphs of Islam, who were Islam's religious and juridical heads, is near the site of Ctesiphon on the Tigris, and Ctesiphon's great arch still stands as the memorial of the splendour of the winter capital of the Persian Sassanid Empire (224-651 A.D.). Bukhara and Herat were jewels in north-eastern Iran, where Achaemenid and Sassanid influence reached the Oxus and Hindu Kush, and the Persian language prevails to this day.

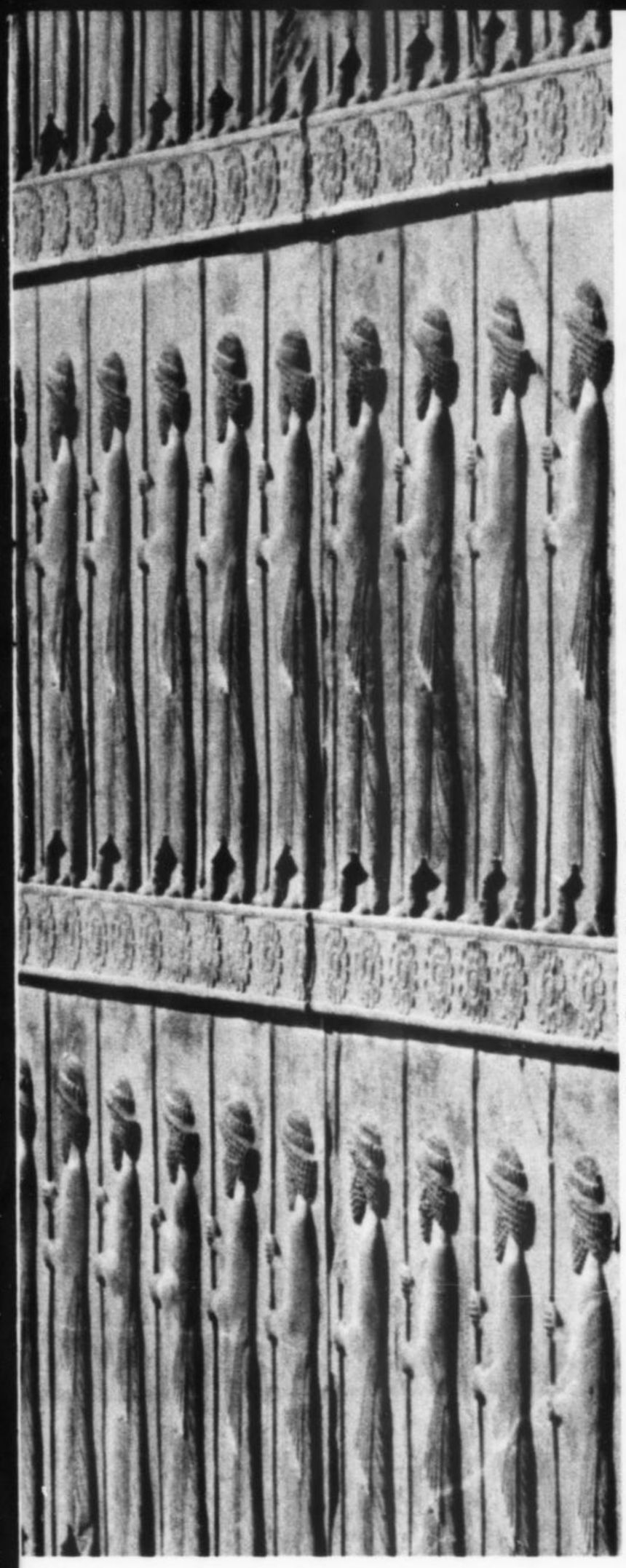
Islam was the faith revealed in the seventh century to the Arabian Prophet Mohammed. Shortly after his death the Arabs' expansion at Iran's and Byzantium's expense made Islam inheritor of an Iranian civilization whose beginnings are traceable to 4000 B.C. Then a pottery existed on the Iranian Plateau with designs which reveal that the leap from realism into abstract stylization had already been made; made first of all by prehistoric Iranian potters.

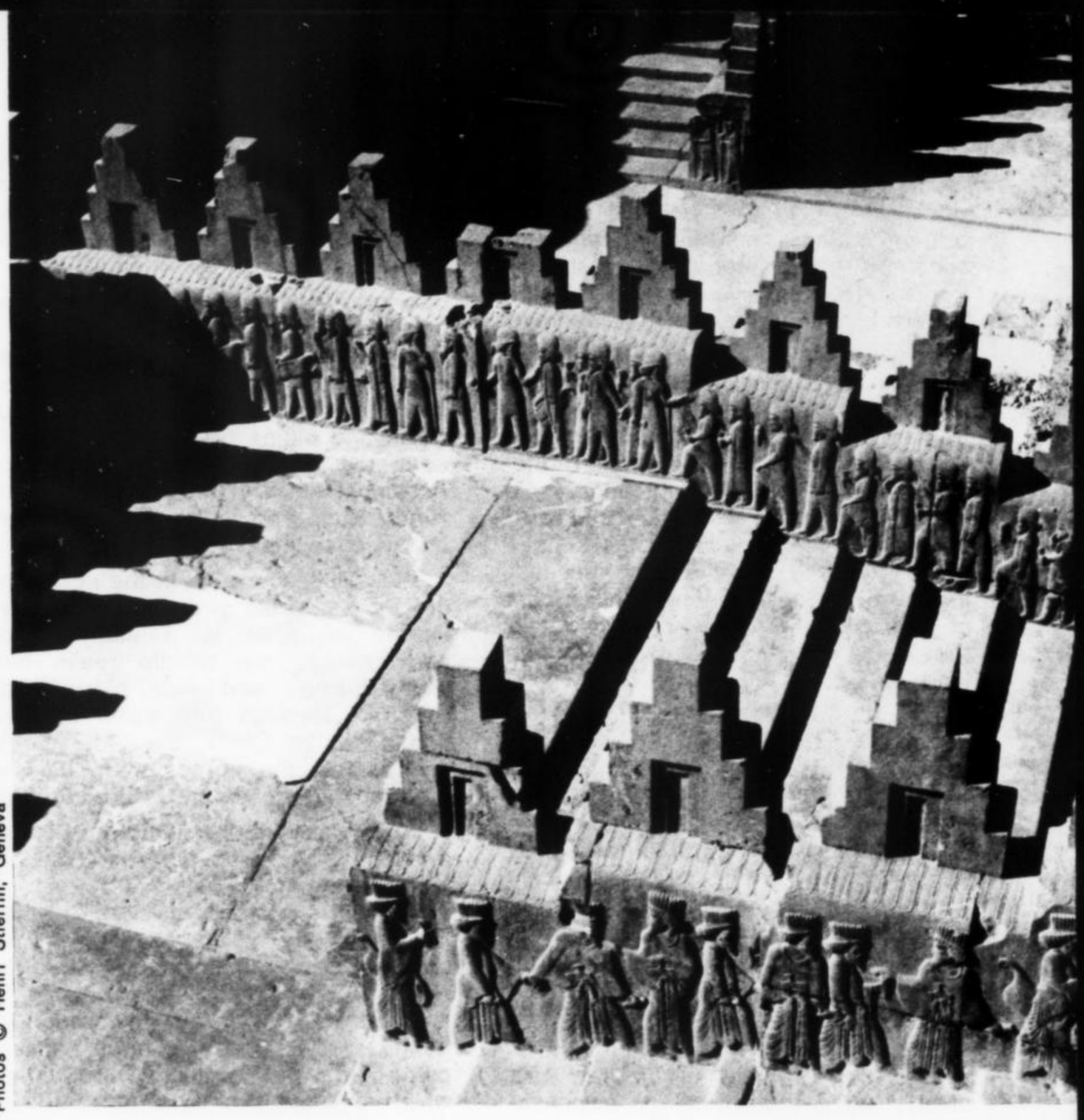
From this discovery it is evident how in the clear atmosphere characteristic of Iran, man's genius was early diverted from observation and imitation of natural objects to transmuting observation into the ordering of abstract design.

Objects seen—animals poised to spring, birds in flight—were transformed into universal concepts by the ingenuity of prehistoric Iranians, and Iranians have maintained this capacity to universalize the particular in their arts ever since, thus displaying the highest mark of civilization.

The art of those first potters can be seen again in the bounding gazelles and partridges on the wing that decorate the pages of sixteenth century manuscripts as motifs incidental to more fully developed scenes, of princes carousing or embattled against backgrounds of landscapes which are in a Chinese style and include tents from the Steppes of Central Asia; or of philosophers such as Avicenna (Ibn Sina), discoursing to pupils on themes preserved from defunct Greek schools, but taught in medieval Iranian college courtyards.

The clarity of the Iranian climate is





Photos © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

Monumental stairways of Persepolis. Opposite and below, sculptured reliefs depicting royal guards on the stairway leading to the Apadana (audience hall). Above, carved frieze of nobles adorns the stairs to the Tripylon. Medes (far wall) wear rounded headdresses, Persians (foreground) are shown with fluted tiaras.

Photo Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier

in great part the key to this type of achievement in the visual arts, as later it will be seen to have been to the development of religious attitudes.

It is a special quality of Iranian conditions, by which all comers are captivated and mentally and spiritually enhanced. To it should be added the abrasive quality of rugged mountain topography and parched plains, dramatically relieved by the luxuriance of gardens and coppices in places where carefully husbanded, sparse water supplies meet cultivable soil.

Wine and genius may be said to be natural to Iran, whose middle position between eastern and western continents has always ensured that its genius had much to feed on, much to transmute into something vital and new.

From Herodotus onwards, Iranian adaptability and quickness to borrow

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XUM

from others have frequently been commented on. But rarely has this been done with enough emphasis on the original genius and absolute and unchanging characteristics distinctly Iranian, to make "borrowing" fresh, hitherto unthought-of development, mere imitation being out of the question.

The record can be corrected when it is recognized that the toughness of Iranian conditions, combined with the possibilities of achieving great refinement of living, art and intellect, have forged a human resilience and presence of mind to which others have invariably succumbed, never succeeding in erasing the influence and effects of Iranian talent, however calamitously they may have assaulted the Iranian land.

Thus, to a greater extent than a rival Greek might have seen fit to report, Iranians have received less than they have exported, or given to their not always invited guests. Invaders have been of inferior culture, attracted by Iran's superior civilization and quickly conquered by it. From Arabs out of the desert and nomads from the Asiatic steppes Iran could hope to receive little but an influx of fresh vitality and the arduous challenge of refining it into the Iranian way of life.

This is to speak as if Iran had always been, and that not successfully, on the defensive. On the offensive against the ancient Greeks, Iran came into Europe and in its turn provided the challenge which broadened the Hellenes' horizon and, for example, in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, gave the world a Greek philosophical tale, based on the examples furnished by Iranian monarchy, and, interestingly enough, written in a strikingly Persian style of exemplary political polemic.

Iranians brought Europe lucerne, the fodder of their famous cavalry, and also the domestic fowl, the white dove, and the peacock. Darius had fruit trees from his eastern provinces transplanted to regions west of the Euphrates. The pistachio was taken to Syria, rice to Mesopotamia, sesame to Egypt, all within the confines of ancient Iranian empires. The Shahinshah's favourite wines, however, failed to flourish in Damascus.

Salted fish from the Persian Gulf was eaten in Asia Minor and part of Egypt's tribute to Iran was paid in revenue from the Mediterranean and Nile fisheries; the statecraft of the Achaemenid King of Kings accomplished and maintained in balance the first and one of the vastest of amalgams of human resources.

Iranian initiative has repeatedly revived this dream of the universal state. Alexander the Great himself, to win his subordinates' approval, after they had reproached him for having become too Iranian in outlook, destroyed the Achaemenid's cosmopolitan amalgamation in 331 B.C.

Long afterwards, when through Iranian intrepidity and that of Iranized Arabs the Moslem Caliphate of Baghdad rose in 750 A.D., the stage was set for another far-reaching amalgamation of human forces and global resources: the Perso-Moslem unity.

Geography has endowed the occupants of the Iranian uplands with a very wide theatre in which to spread the operations and influence of their genius. They overlook the Oxus basin and plains of Asia in the north-east, the Tigris-Euphrates valley and Arabian Desert in the south-west, the Hindu Kush and Indian Sub-Continent in the east and south-east.

The Caucasus rises in the north and the Persian Gulf girdles the southern shores of what is a many-doored caravanserai, the middle realm between Europe and Asia, Africa and Siberia. Through Iran came the silk and paper of China, the Indies' gold and spices, the horses and hides of Central Asia, to reach the Roman sea.

When an Iranian empire of old expanded, it followed the ancient world's primary arteries of trade between east and west. It supplemented its wealth by tolls on merchandise, upon whose raw materials it placed the stamp of Iranian craftsmanship. It touched the goods passing through its hands with the quickening luminosity of the Iranian mind; with that art which the early potters on the Persian plateau had practised.

Not only were designs and images passed on, so that patterns were spread—on cloth or woven into carpets—to speak the world over of how an Iranian weaver sees flowers, the delicate poplar, the bird on the bough, the very colours of Iranian soil and Iranian contrasts of red, deep blue and green. Religious ideas were also exported, to lie deep in Judaism, Christianity, and profoundly to shape the Islamic faith Iran took as its own.

Darius's vines transplanted to Damascene soil may not have taken there, but aspects of the ritual of Iran's ancient Zoroastrian religion have their place in the wine of the Christian Eucharist.

The heavenly galaxies nightly shine more brightly on a land most of which is over four thousand feet above sea-level, than they do on mistier, more low-lying regions. There is never a day without the light of the sun in the country whose mythical king Hushang discovered how to produce fire, his son Jamshid making the festival of Nauruz, the New Year, mark the vernal equinox.

Iran's brightness is reflected in the enamel-like brilliance both of its visual arts and the imagery of its exquisite poetry. The sense of Heaven being almost within reach has developed the Iranian spiritual genius to a degree which makes the Persian people naturally religious, so that their literature and art seem always unavoidably communicative of the Grace of God.

Their spirituality confers on them both their innate and abiding yearning for a greater perfection than the world immediately offers, and their peculiar power to lend lustre to whatever they handle. It offers them the hope of grace, but also engenders pessimism and scepticism about the mortal state. Nevertheless, in Iran spirituality and pragmatism are so balanced that to its poetry the world may turn for enlightenment and consolation when other sources of inspiration fail to assuage human despair.

Asia and Europe are fortunate to be bridged by a land whose brightness could supplant the Mongols' clouded superstition by vision, so that as an Iranian ruler, even a descendant of Chingiz Khan, Ghazan (1295-1304), became a polymath and, while dismissing the vanities of alchemy, kept its processes, aware of the scientific value of experiment.

It was the Iranian brightness which taught Mohammed the Prophet's successors that they were not only the keepers of Moslem law. Theirs also to keep was a revelation which answered man's most exalted spiritual aspirations. The Iranian Sufi mystics

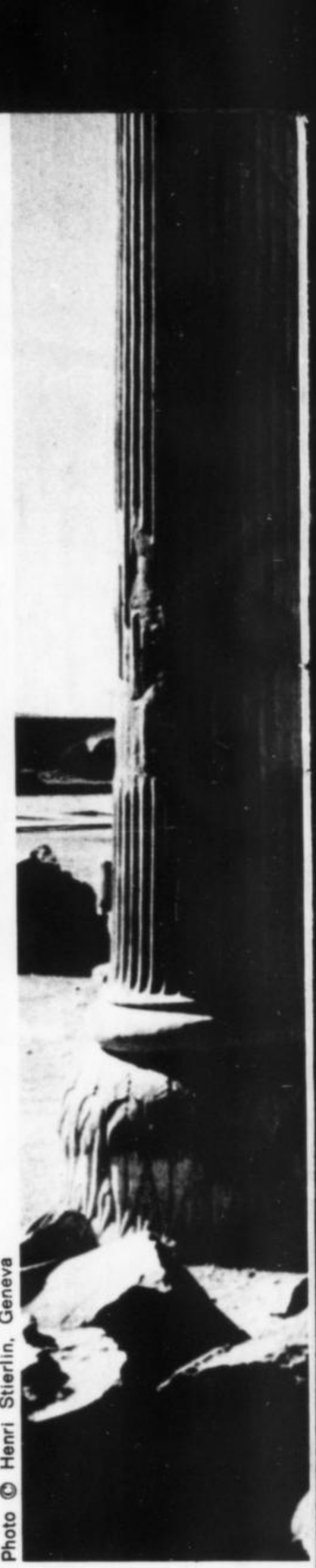


Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

A general view of the Apadana, the audience hall of Darius I. Of its original 36 slender fluted columns, 19 m. (63 ft.) high, and the 36 columns in the three porticoes to this great hall, 13 are still standing.

have kept clear for mankind the concept which the example of Mohammed, God's Chosen Apostle, conveyed: that men's hearts when purified may become the mirror of God's unblemished light.

The bridging role has, however, brought vicissitudes. The Iranian spirit's strength and resilience have often been severely tried. It is well for the world that they have emerged from these trials as keen, flexible and unbreakable as well-tempered steel, for the world can still derive a great deal from Iran that is beneficial in the cultural and political spheres.

A crossroads is a vantage point from which to observe the ways of men in their different regions and contexts. It is also the place in which a people possessed, through a long and eventful history, of an almost unparallelled experience of human affairs can set up the signposts commonly to be found at crossroads.

At the Iranian junction of history, cultures and indigenous aptitude, Europe can be explained to Asia and Asia can teach Europe. Iran's windows are like the faces of Janus. Iran is a sharp-eyed, keenly observant Janus.

Modern Iran now possesses resources and has regained the self-confidence lost in the thraldom and period of foreign domination and exploitation which began in 1722 when the Safavid dynasty lost power.

Now Iran again commands international respect. It both can and does play a positive rôle in world affairs. As a member of the United Nations it sets the pace for other developing countries, and has become the obvious milieu for international conventions for the discussion of such topics as nutrition, agricultural development, illiteracy, the rights of women.

It is thus once more the centre where ideas and techniques may be pooled, to meet the problems of the less technologically advanced Orient with the experience and skills of the more technologically advanced Occident, Iran acting as the catalyst.

Seekers of solutions to the world's problems could have no more generous and perfect hosts than the Iranians, whose courtesy is rightly proverbial and has been almost since time began; but whose long experience as the guardians of civilization against the encroachment of desert sands, of rapacious enemies, of chaos and disorderliness makes them more than gracious hosts.

The slightest realization of what Iran has achieved in improving its own domestic well-being since 1960, and this measured against the former drain of its old resources, and its incapacity for over a century during modern times to act independently, will demonstrate that the potentiality alluded to here is not exaggerated.

A wider ranging study of Iran's history, and a proper understanding of its geographical position in a world in which the East is stirring into new life, will amply reinforce the argument that confidence in Iran's capacity for showing initiative and vitality, and willingness to accord it the respect it deserves, could procure for the world the contribution of a stabilizing force that a region which might easily become greatly disturbed urgently requires. ■

XUM

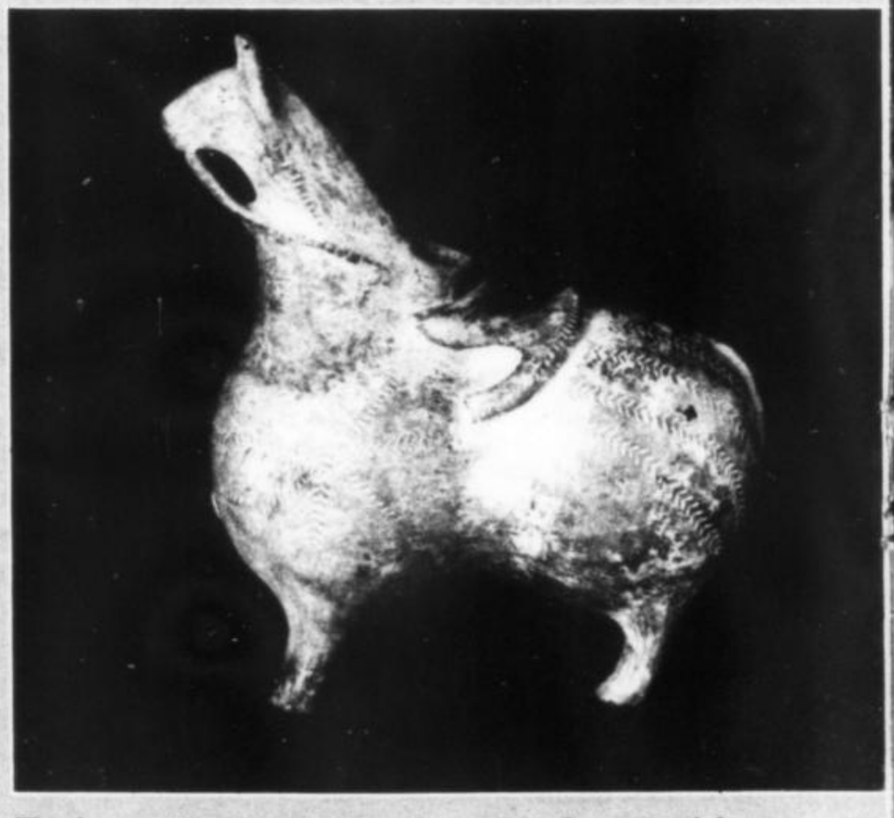
Evidence that craftsmen on the Iranian plateau used the potter's wheel as early as 3500 B.C. has been found at Sialk, an oasis site that gives its name to one of the most elegant styles of Iran's ancient ceramic art. This 11th century B.C. vase decorated with the shapes of wild goats is typical of the Sialk style. (Archaeological Museum, Teheran)

A PERSIAN BESTIARY

This strangely shaped 9th century B.C. goblet comes from Persian Azerbaijan, not far from Tabriz in north-western Iran. Pottery of similar style is by no means uncommon among the finds from sites which have enabled archaeologists to trace the cultures that developed in this region between 2200 and 800 B.C. (Foroughi Collection)

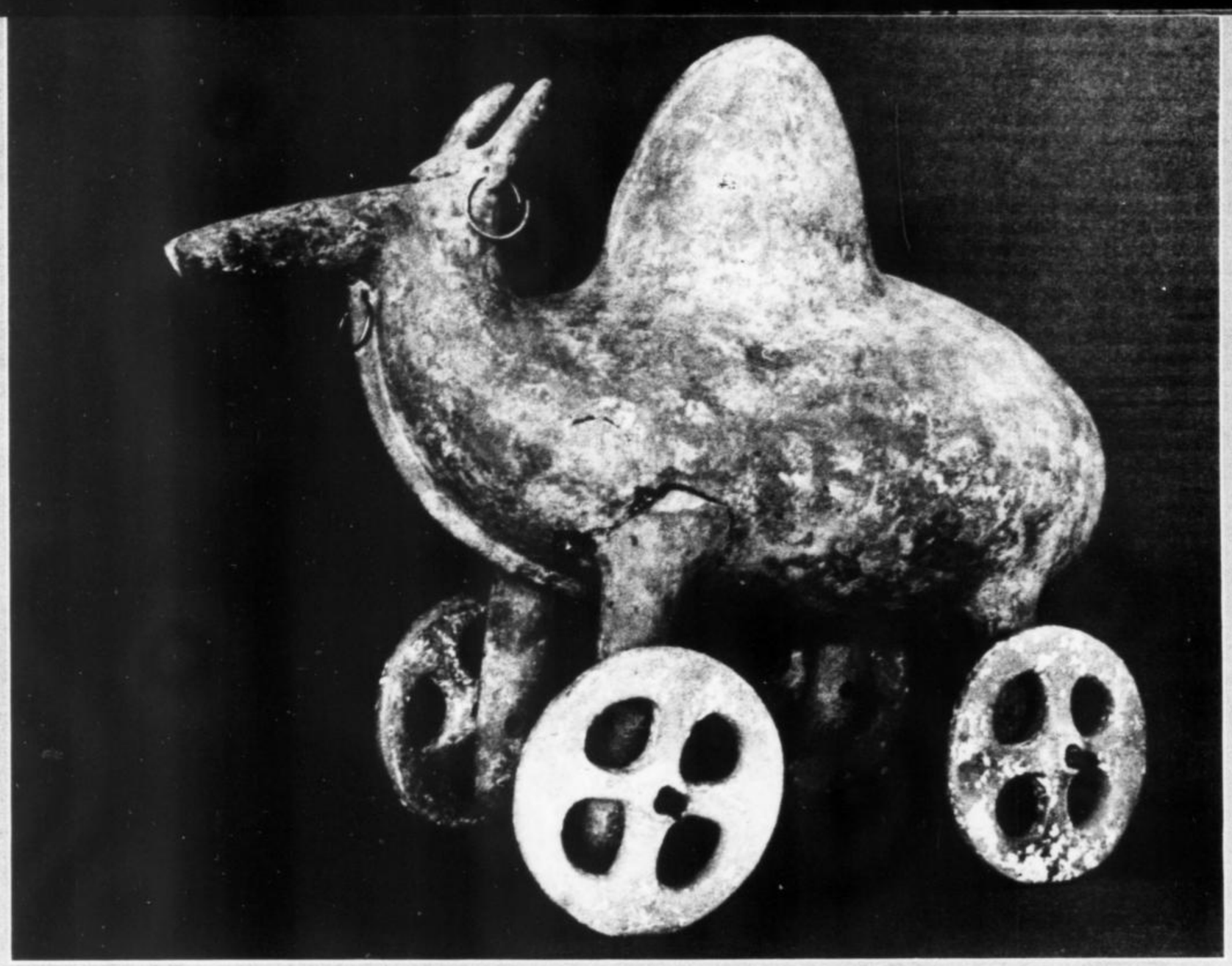
At the start of the Iron Age in Iran, around 1200 B.C., numerous cultures began to develop in Azerbaijan along the southern shores of Lake Rezaiyeh. The use of mules as water carriers at that time is confirmed by this piece of pottery, dating from the 9th century B.C. (Foroughi Collection)

Animals, depicted in natural or stylized forms, were a favourite motif of potters in ancient Iran. Here a goat's head has been incorporated as the handle of a 9th century B.C. pitcher with the goat's body and the body of the pitcher fused into one. (Foroughi Collection)



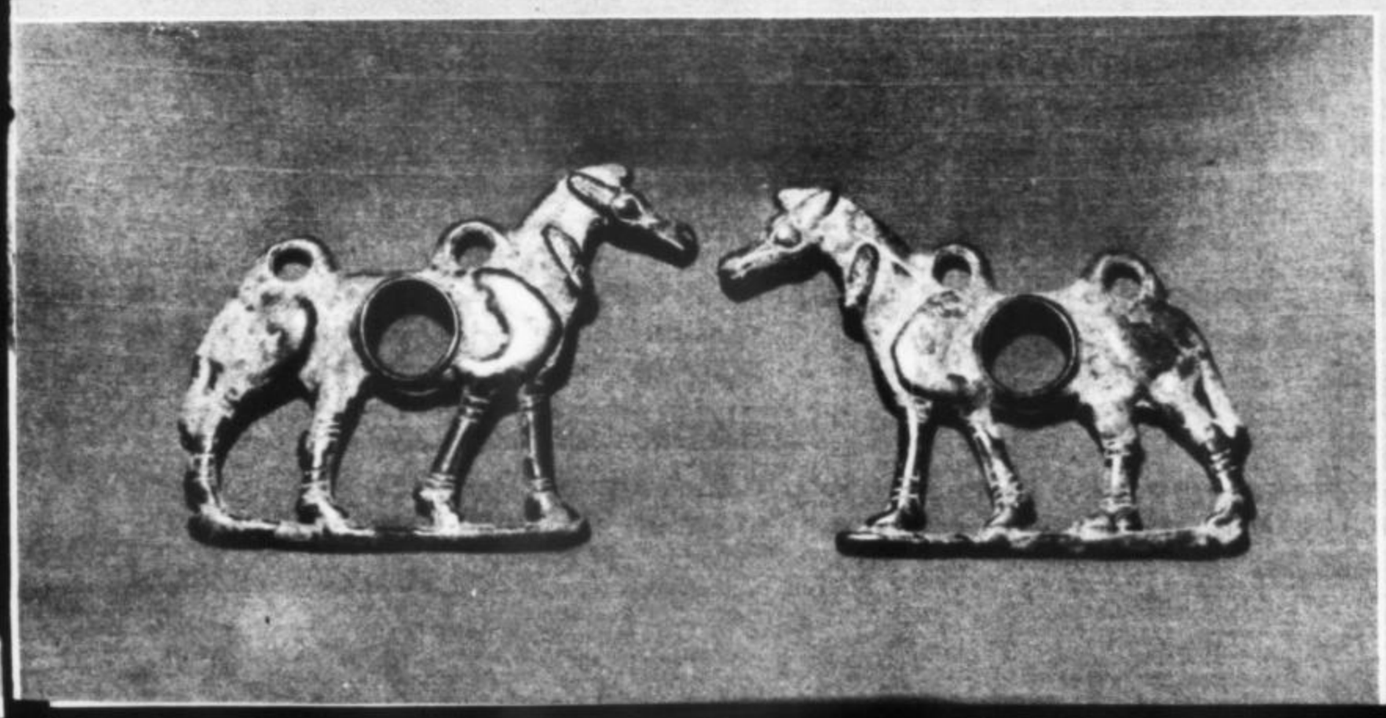
The horse figures prominently among the animal forms favoured by the artists of ancient Iran, particularly in the pottery unearthed from sites in Azerbaijan. This vase in the shape of a horse dates from the 9th century B.C. (Foroughi Collection)

All photos on these pages by Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier



To the south of the Caspian Sea, at the foot of the Elborz mountains, lies the province of Gilan, famous for its mild climate. In the valley of the Crystal River archaeologists have unearthed several royal burial grounds, including those of Marlik and Kaluraz. This figure of a camel on wheels (8th century B.C.) was recovered from one of these tombs (Archaeological Museum, Teheran)

A pottery horse (10th century B.C.) from Azerbaijan. Note the birds and beasts decorating it. The peoples of early Iran are thought to have attributed supernatural powers to all animals, wild and domestic. (Archaeological Museum, Teheran)



The origin and dating of the first bronze artefacts wrought by the nomad herders and horsemen of Luristan, in southern Iran, is one of the highly controversial problems of Iranian archaeology. This pair of bronze bridle pieces, in the shape of horses, dated from the 8th century B.C., captures the image of a nomad people and their wandering existence. (Archaeological Museum, Teheran)

XUM

The scientific legacy of Iran

by Desmond Stewart

MODERN man lives longer, in an environment increasingly understood, thanks in part to the labours of the turbaned scientists of medieval Iran. The munificence of their scientific contribution indeed constitutes a mystery which some writers have tried to unlock by invoking race.

Climate and geography are more rational keys. Iran's climate, torrid in summer and in winter icy, at once stimulated and hardened its sons. Its position as the mountainous turntable linking India, Central Asia, the Middle East and Europe entailed invasions by Greeks and Arabs from the west, by Seljuk Turks and Mongols from the east; its people were thus thrown in vivid contact with varied traditions.

Iran's own periods of attack, when Persian armies moved east or west, played their role in mixing a distinctive blend of humanism, speculation and practicality.

Since the Iranian character typically expressed itself in what was useful as well as beautiful, an appropriate point at which to begin a discussion of Iranian science is medicine, a science which modern man can acclaim without reserve.

Iran's medical tradition was already old when the conquests of Alexander the Great linked the Persian plateau with the Hellenistic world. Persian myth ascribed the introduction of the healer's art to Jamshid, the legendary fourth hero and king of Iran.

Much later, the greatest Persian historian of medicine, Ibn abí Usaybi'a believed that so noble a science must, like the Koran, have derived from a revelation of God. With such antecedents, the Iranian physician, usually deriving from a noble family, enjoyed a loftier social position than his confrères in the Greco-Roman world.

At the same time the Iranian openness to outside ideas made such historical kings as Cyrus and Darius proud to have imported Egyptian physicians (particularly those specialized in the eye diseases common in the dusty east) to their imperial courts.

The same tolerant spirit was later instrumental in making Sassanian Iran the originator of medical schools. For in the three centuries between the conversion of Constantine and the rise of Islam the Byzantine persecution of heretics and pagans drove east, first the Nestorian scholar-physicians of Syria and then the last Neo-Platonists of Greece.

All found a hospitable welcome across the border in south-west Iran. One town, Jundishapur near the modern Ahwaz, housed a cosmopolitan university with a scientific bent, which reached its zenith under the 6th century Núshírván, known to the west as Khosroes the Great.

Most of the instruction in its medical school was in Syriac, but its scholars also spoke Sanskrit, Greek and early Persian. Besides translating Greek and Indian authors with an Elizabethan fervour, the university produced original works. One Sassanian product was a thirty-volume encyclopaedia dealing with all then known poisons and their properties.

The Arab invaders of the 7th century respected Jundishapur, but their effect on the Persian language was similar to that of William the Conqueror on Anglo-Saxon. Henceforth for some centuries Arabic was the *lingua franca* of all educated Moslems.

Yet far from restricting Persian genius, the Islamic conquest gave it a 'global village' in which to act. Iranian science particularly flourished once the Abbasids moved the caliphal capital from Damascus, close to the Hellenistic Mediterranean, to the site of Baghdad but a day's journey from the Iranian foothills.

Baghdad was founded in the mid-8th century by Mansur, a belligerent caliph tormented by indigestion. Cured by the chief physician of Jundishapur (he was summoned to the capital when Mansur's own doctors admitted themselves defeated) the Caliph encouraged an immigration of Iranian scholars from Jundishapur, which increased under his descendants.

The Abbasids lasted in Iran from the 8th Century until their final defeat by the Mongols in 1258. They not only married Iranian women but sponsored a cultural compost in which Arabs largely dominated the studies linked to language—theology, poetry and law—while conceding to foreigners, and in particular Persians, what we would think of as the physical or practical sciences, but which they termed "foreign".

Mansur's great-grandson, al-Ma'mun (whose mother and wife were both Persians) founded a "House of Wisdom" comparable in cultural importance to the Mouseion founded by the Ptolemies in Alexandria more than a thousand years before. Appropriately, much of the science of Alexandria was translated into Arabic, often via Cyriac, for Ma'mun's *Dar al-Hikmah* (DAR).

THE institution's most famous head was Hunayn ibn Ishaq, born at Hira in Iraq. Hunayn pursued the medical manuscripts of Galen with a lover's passion. He was never satisfied until he had obtained the most accurate text available even if this necessitated exhausting Middle Eastern journeys.

Other scholars translated the geometry of Euclid, the Almagest of Ptolemy as well as the works of Archimedes, the greatest practical scientist of the ancient world. It was not until the late 12th century, three hundred years after Hunayn's death, that these works were restored to Europe through the activities of men such as Gerard of Cremona working in Toledo at the frontiers of Christian and Moslem Spain.

But Iranian physicians also made original constributions both in the

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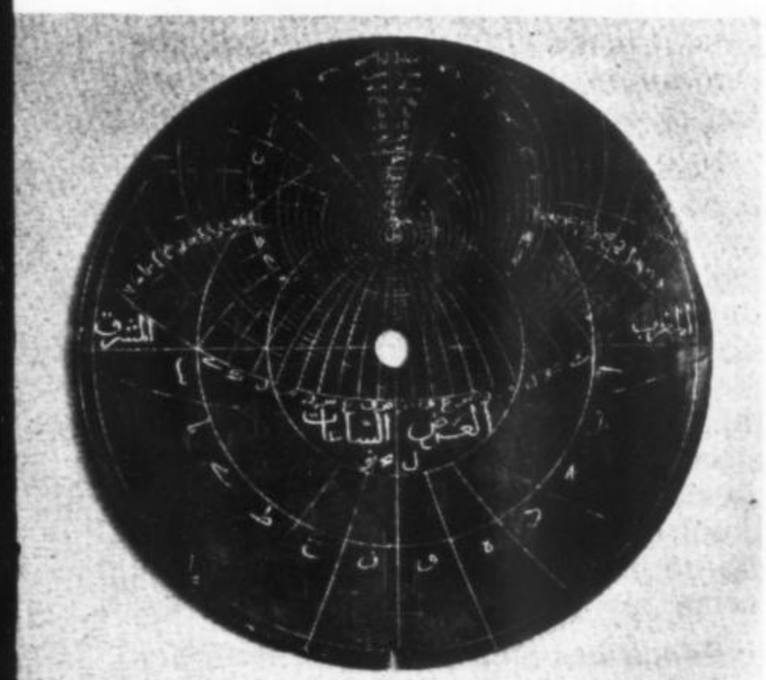
DESMOND STEWART *is a British author who has written widely on the Middle East. The early development of science in the Arab world and its influence on other cultures has interested him for many years. His works include "Early Islam", "The Middle East: Temple of Janus" (a comprehensive history of the region from 1869 to the present day) and "The Arab world".*

As early as the 10th century A.D. Persian scholars and craftsmen were renowned for the design and manufacture of astronomical instruments. These 17th century Persian astrolabes — instruments for taking the altitudes of celestial bodies—show the delicacy of workmanship and precision of design for which the work of Persian astrolabe makers was prized from Asia to Europe.



Photos © Henry Cohen - Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, Paris

Photo © Bodleian Library, Oxford

A study of the stars was part of the normal learning of the educated Persian in medieval times. This representation of the constellation Virgo, shown as a human figure with dots indicating the stars, illustrates a 10th century "Treatise on the Fixed Stars" by an Iranian scholar, Abd ar-Rahman As-Sufi. The figure is reproduced from a copy of As-Sufi's work made by his son in 1009 and now preserved in the Department of Oriental Books, Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS. Marsh 144, p. 223). Pictures in As-Sufi's treatise reveal a Moslem transformation of classical images of constellations as human figures, in both dress and appearance, which is strongly Oriental, particularly for women.

Photo © "World Health"

One of the greatest legacies left by the Persians in the field of medicine is their conception of hospitals. The modern hospital, it has been said, is a direct growth of Persian foundations. Doctors and teachers of medicine were drawn from Persia to staff hospitals and schools of medicine in Baghdad and other cities. Painting (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) shows Persian pharmacists preparing medicine about 1224 A.D.

Photo © Giraudon, Paris

Ancient Persian medical books describe operations from trepanning of the skull to excision of varicose veins. Persian doctors are credited with using many chemical drugs of which the sulphonamides of today are the heirs. This medieval Persian engraving shows a physician treating a patient's ear.

Photo © "World Health"

Persian doctors not only developed new treatments with medicinal drugs, but adopted the scientific methods of other peoples and modified them by their own discoveries. In hospitals specialization was encouraged. This 12th century Persian miniature shows treatment of the spinal column.

SCIENTIFIC LEGACY *(Continued)*

diagnosis of diseases (one was whooping cough) and, most important of all, in treatment. The modern hospital is the lineal descendant of the Islamic *maristan*, seen by Crusaders in the Holy Land and visitors to Egypt. It derived from Persia.

The greatest medieval clinician was Razi, born near the modern Teheran in 865. Living seven centuries before the theory of bacteria was first proposed, Razi intuitively discerned the importance of hygiene. When commissioned to choose a site for a new hospital in Baghdad, he hung joints of fresh meat at different points round the sprawling, circular city. Where the meat took longest to decay, there he sited his *maristan*.

Razi was a prolific writer, devoting half of a reputed output of 200 works to medicine. His description of smallpox, clearly differentiating it from other disruptive ailments, enabled later physicians both to diagnose the dread disease and predict its course. His treatment was based on good diet and nursing amidst clean and comfortable surroundings. It has not been radically bettered since.

Razi's most important legacy was his monumental encyclopaedia. In this he recorded both the extensive clinical observations which earned him his honorific title "The Experienced" and the collected knowledge of Greek, Syrian, Arab, Hindu and Persian doctors.

An equally versatile physician was Ibn Sina (980-1037), the Latin version of whose name, Avicenna, testifies to a reputation that leapt the frontiers of faith. It leapt centuries too. His *Canon of Medicine*, a million-word encyclopaedia dealing with the treatment of disease in all its aspects, was the standard teaching text in European universities from its translation into Latin in the 12th century until the medical revolution of the 17th: a record for durability beaten only by Galen.

Razi and Ibn Sina, though living in successive centuries, shared the polymathic approach to learning characteristic of medieval Islam. The hundred or so works of Razi which were not concerned with medicine dealt with alchemy, theology and astronomy; Ibn Sina's non-medical writings treated philosophy (in which he synthesized Aristotle, Neo-Platonism and Islamic theology), astronomy and mathematics. As an interesting innovation, he wrote some his books in Persian.

Persia was an important transmission point for Hindu numerals in their voyage to the west. They were first publicized to the Islamic world in the first half of the 9th century by al-Khwarizmi, whose name shows that he comes from a city just south of the Aral Sea. Astronomer and geographer, he also served as court mathematician to al-Ma'mun, the founder of the House of Wisdom. By synthesizing Greek and Hindu mathematical knowledge, al-Khwarizmi

influenced medieval mathematical thought more than any other individual.

Yet there was again a surprising time lag in the European acceptance of Hindu numerals. Not until 1202 did Fibonacci (an Italian with North African contacts) publish his oddly named "Book of the Abacus"; this for the first time explained the numeral system which would, slowly, put paid to the abacus.

Because the Hindu numerals, as modified by Moslems, had by this time been used by the Arabs of North Africa for some centuries, Europeans designated them as Arabic; others at the time called them "Jewish", since the Jews were far in advance of their Christian contemporaries in knowledge of Islamic science.

Along with Hindu numerals, the Hindu decimal system and the concept of zero were transmitted through Iranian mathematicians such as al-Khwarizmi. The Arabic word for an empty object, *sifr*, was translated as *zephyrum* in Latin. Besides using its Italian derivative *zero*, English keeps the original *sifr* as "cipher".

The use of Hindu numerals and the zero made it possible for al-Khwarizmi to compose the first easily intelligible text-book on Algebra. The word probably derives from al-Khwarizmi's *Ketab al-Jabra wa'l-Muqabala*, which can be roughly paraphrased as "the art of bringing together unknowns to make a known quantity."

Al-Khwarizmi took three centuries to reach the west. In 1126 Adelard of Bath, an Englishman who had travelled as far as the Middle East, translated his astronomical tables, which included tables of sines, into Latin. Adelard thus introduced trigonometry to Europe. Algebra was introduced through two versions published in the same year, 1145. The first was made by John of Chester (who had lived in Spain), the second by Plato of Tivoli from the Hebrew translation of his friend, Abraham bar Hiyya.

Sometimes an Iranian scientist would be his own transmitter. An outstanding example was al-Buruni, roughly a contemporary of Ibn Sina's and born, like the inventor of algebra, in Khwarizm. As well as being a mathematician, astronomer, encyclopaedist and rational philosopher (he argued that the exclamation "Allah knows best!" was no excuse for ignorance), al-Buruni was also a geographer who travelled widely.

He translated works of Sanskrit science into Arabic and at the same time transmitted Moslem knowledge to Hindus. Since he had himself accurately determined latitudes and longitudes and discussed the rotation of the earth on its axis, he had much to transmit.

One of the last great Iranian mathematicians died just a few years before Adelard of Bath published his translation of al-Khwarizmi. Omar Khayyam (whose quatrains, woven into a connected poem, *The Rubaiyat*, would burst into the western consciousness with Edward Fitzgerald's 19th century translation) was renowned in his own time (mid 11th to early 12th century) as a mathematician.

Photo © R. J. Mooney - Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

This 15th century Persian miniature from Shiraz gives a good idea of some of the technology and crafts for which Persia has been famous for thousands of years: rug making, weaving and embroidery (lower right and top left), bronzeware and other metalwork (lower left). Note unusual shape of bellows used by craftsman at furnace (left centre). Regal figure (top centre) is Iran's legendary King Jamshid, through whom "all skills appeared on earth".

"His Algebra," George Sarton, the historian of science, has written, "contains geometric and algebraic solutions of the second degree; an admirable classification of equations, including the cubic; a systematic attempt to solve them all, and partial geometric solutions of most of them." His calendar was probably more accurate than the Gregorian.

The Mongol invasions shook the foundations of Islamic culture. But it is worth remembering one positive result of their rule over Iran. Islamic theologians, like their Christian equivalents, had condemned the practice of dissecting corpses, and so made difficult the serious study of anatomy.

In the 9th century, it is true, Yuhanna ibn Masawayh had kept monkeys for the purpose of dissection. But systematic study only became possible under the relative freedom of Mongol rule. The result was the 1396 *Illustrated Anatomy* of Mansur bin Faqih Ilysás. Its illustrations (also abhorrent to the theologically strict) were another result of Mongol tolerance.

After the Mongol invasion, the study of mathematics and astrology continued to flourish, as shown by the construction of observatories at Maragheh and Samarkand.

Limits of space have restricted this discussion to peaks, at the expense of the lesser heights and valleys without which no mountain range exists. Not only have such branches of science as optics been passed over but important names have been omitted. Nor has the question whether some of the scientists were wholly Iranian been discussed.

This suggests indeed a final tribute. To these Iranian physicians, chemists and astronomers the question of their national origin would have seemed irrelevant in a discussion of their work.

Ignorant of racism, though aware of their particularity, they stood as conscious heirs of Greek and Hindu forerunners. They saw their contributions as part of an interwoven human endeavour which had its source in God, the origin of knowledge, and its purpose as the service of his creation, mankind. ■

Sacred art in

by Seyyed Hossein Nasr

THROUGHOUT Persian history an especially intimate relation has always existed between art and the spiritual discipline of the dominant religion of the day. For this reason it is sometimes difficult in Persian culture to distinguish sacred art from traditional art of which it forms a part.

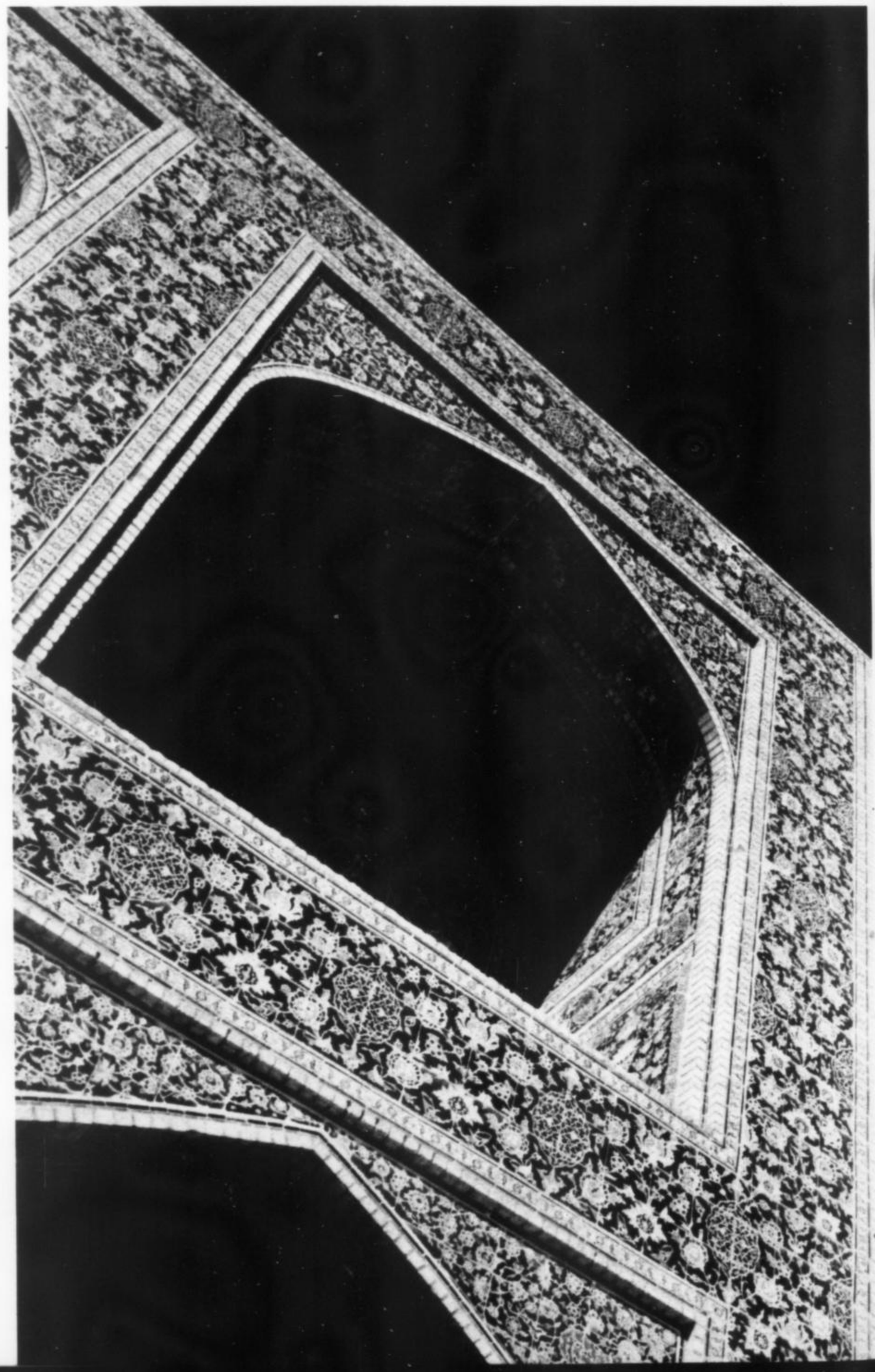
However, the term "sacred art" can be taken as being limited to those traditional artistic expressions directly connected with spiritual principles, with religious and initiatory rites, with sacred subjects and with symbolism of a spiritual character.

Since sacred art is the bridge between the material and the spiritual worlds, it is inseparable from the particular religion with which it is connected. We can speak logically of Hindu, Buddhist and Moslem sacred art, but not, for example, of Indian sacred art, if by India we mean a land and a people.

Certain forms and artistic symbols, it is true, are sometimes borrowed from one religion by another, but the spirit behind them is transformed in the process. Both Islam and Byzantine Christianity adopted Sassanid techniques of dome construction, producing domed buildings which, however, reflect two different types of art.

Islamic art adopted many art motifs of pre-Islamic Persia as well as of central Asia, but they became transformed by the spirit of Islam and served as building blocks in structures whose design was completely Islamic.

Most of the important remnants of the art of the pre-Islamic period in



SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR *is Vice-Chancellor of Teheran University, and professor of the history of science and philosophy as well as dean of the Faculty of Arts and Letters. A member of Iran's Supreme Council for Culture and National Council for Higher Education, he has written 12 books and over 100 articles in English, French, Persian and Arabic. His books in English include: "Three Muslim Sages", "An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines", "Science and Civilization in Islam", "The Encounter of Man and Nature" and "Iran" (Unesco, 1968). His latest book, "Sufi Essays" was published recently by Allen and Unwin, London. Prof. Nasr is at work on a major research project on Sacred Art in Persian Culture from which the above text is inspired.*

Persian culture

The sacred art of Persia attains a pinnacle of expression in the Royal Mosque at Isfahan, once the capital of Persia. Its palaces, mosques, squares and gardens rose as if by magic in less than 18 years during the reign of Shah Abbas I (1587-1629). Here the rich elegance of the architectural forms has been captured by the photographer at a propitious moment of the day when the play of light and shadow accentuates every line and form.

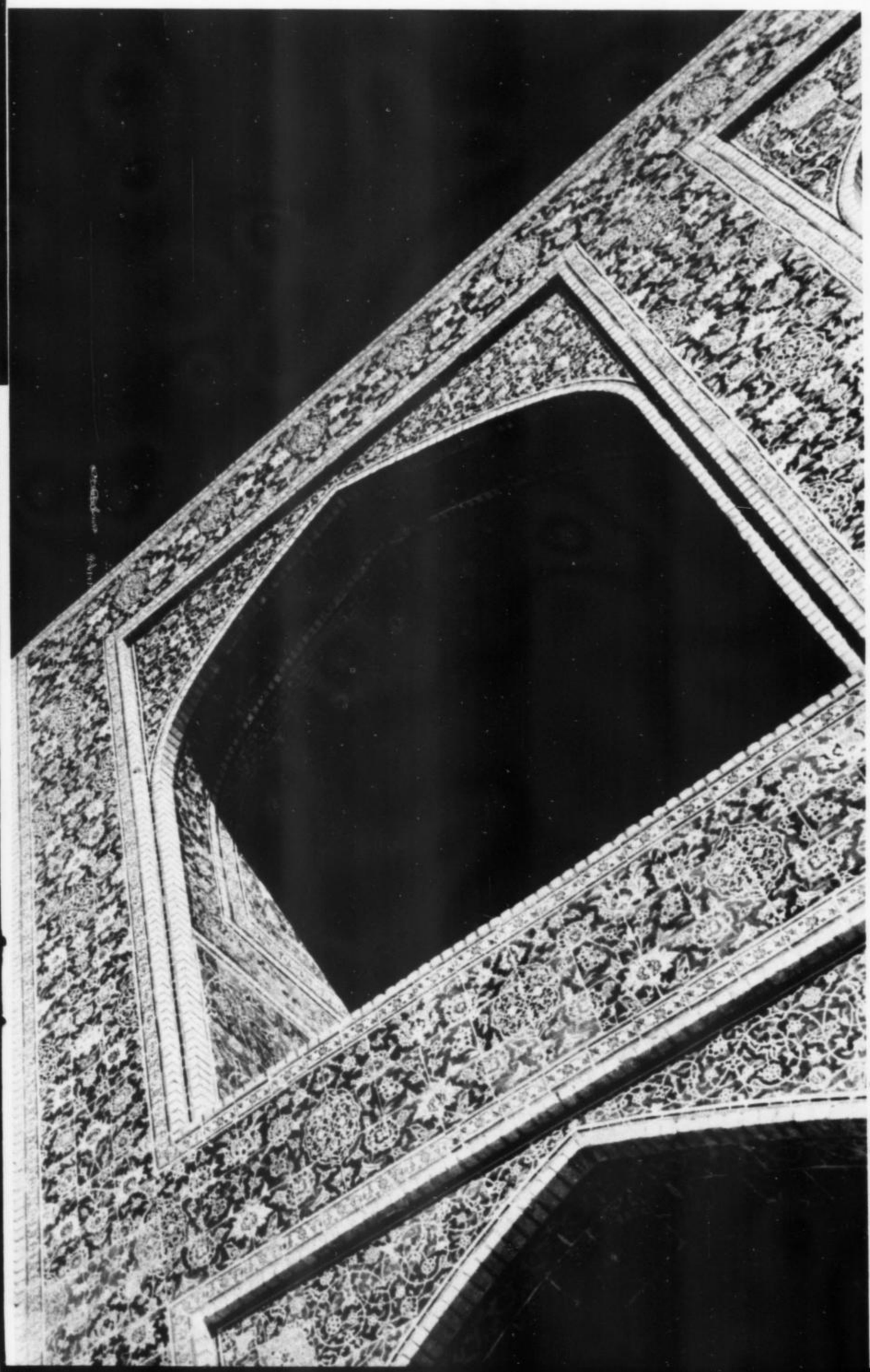


Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

Persia are either religious or royal in character. And since the monarchy was quasi-religious in nature, the royal art was in turn closely identified with the Zoroastrian view of the world.

An American specialist on Iranian art, A.U. Pope, has suggested that Persepolis was constructed as a palace for religious ceremonies as much as for the purposes of political rule, the architectural forms and the layout of the gardens being a form of mandala [a graphic mystic symbol of the universe] closing upon an inner centre and serving as a "reminder" of paradise. The word paradise itself, as well as the word *firdaws* in Arabic, derives from the Avestan *pairi-daeza* meaning garden.

In pre-Islamic Persia, we can include under Zoroastrian forms of sacred art the architecture of the fire-temples, the music and poetry that accompanied Zoroastrian rites, and the sacerdotal dress of which some images have remained.

Also certainly of traditional character and associated with royal initiation and the "lesser mysteries" are the heraldic symbols found in many different forms and shapes and resembling in character and significance the heraldic art of other oriental civilizations and the medieval West.

Like its successor Islam, Zoroastrianism possessed none of the religious idols found in other Indo-European religions or the religion of ancient Greece. Hence there is no sacred art in the form of sculpture to be found in Zoroastrian Persia. To find sacred images in the form of statues we have to go back to the pre-Zoroastrian religions of Iran.

Even Mithraism, which arose from a Zoroastrian background and left many statues outside Persia, did not leave any statues in Persia itself. The image of Ahura-Mazda, represented by two wings, is the closest we can get to a sacred image in Zoroastrianism. But even these images were carved on large pieces of stone or on the sides of mountains; separate statues were not made of them.

The Zoroastrian angels, which would correspond to the divinities or gods of other Indo-European religions, were

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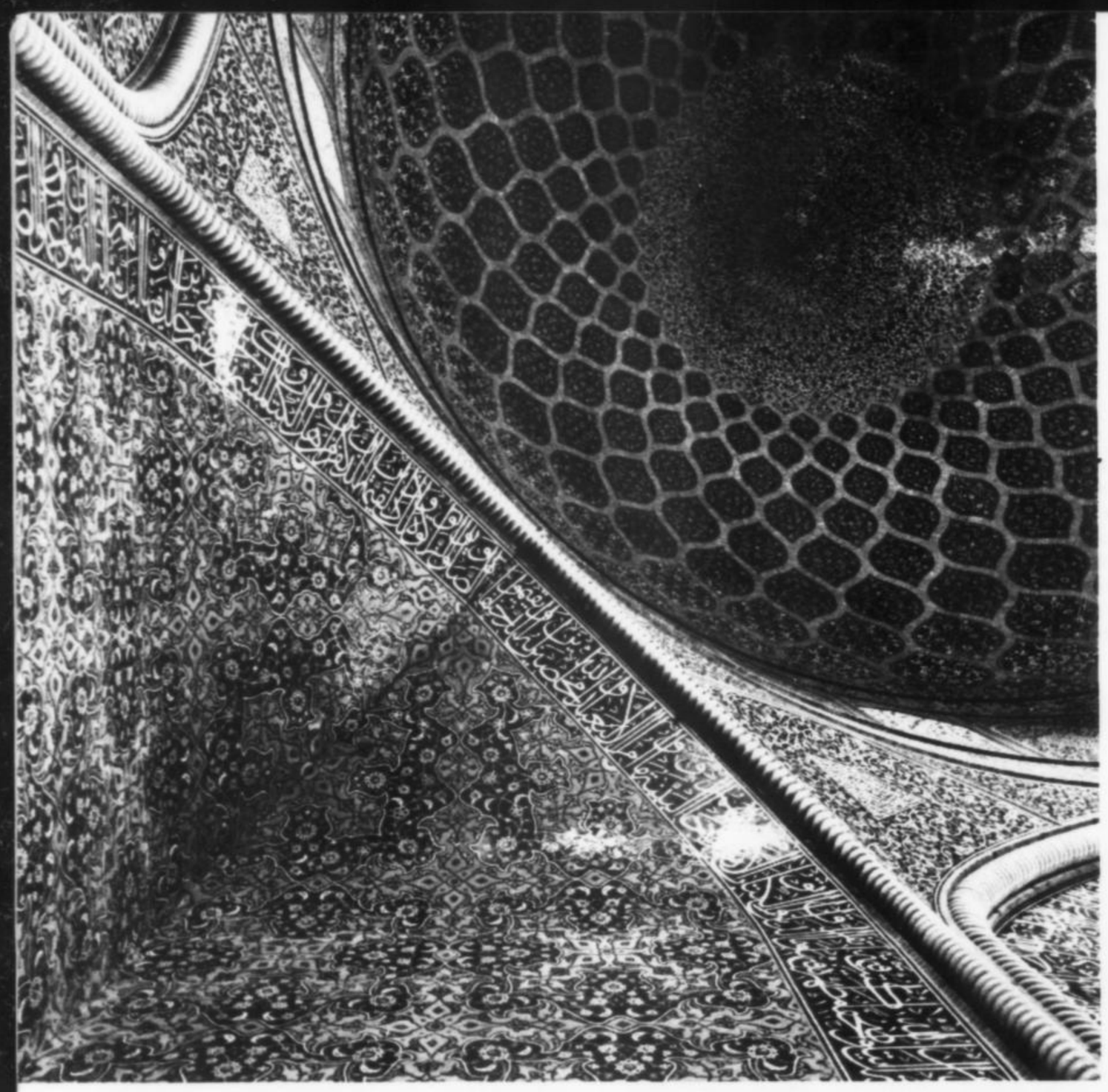
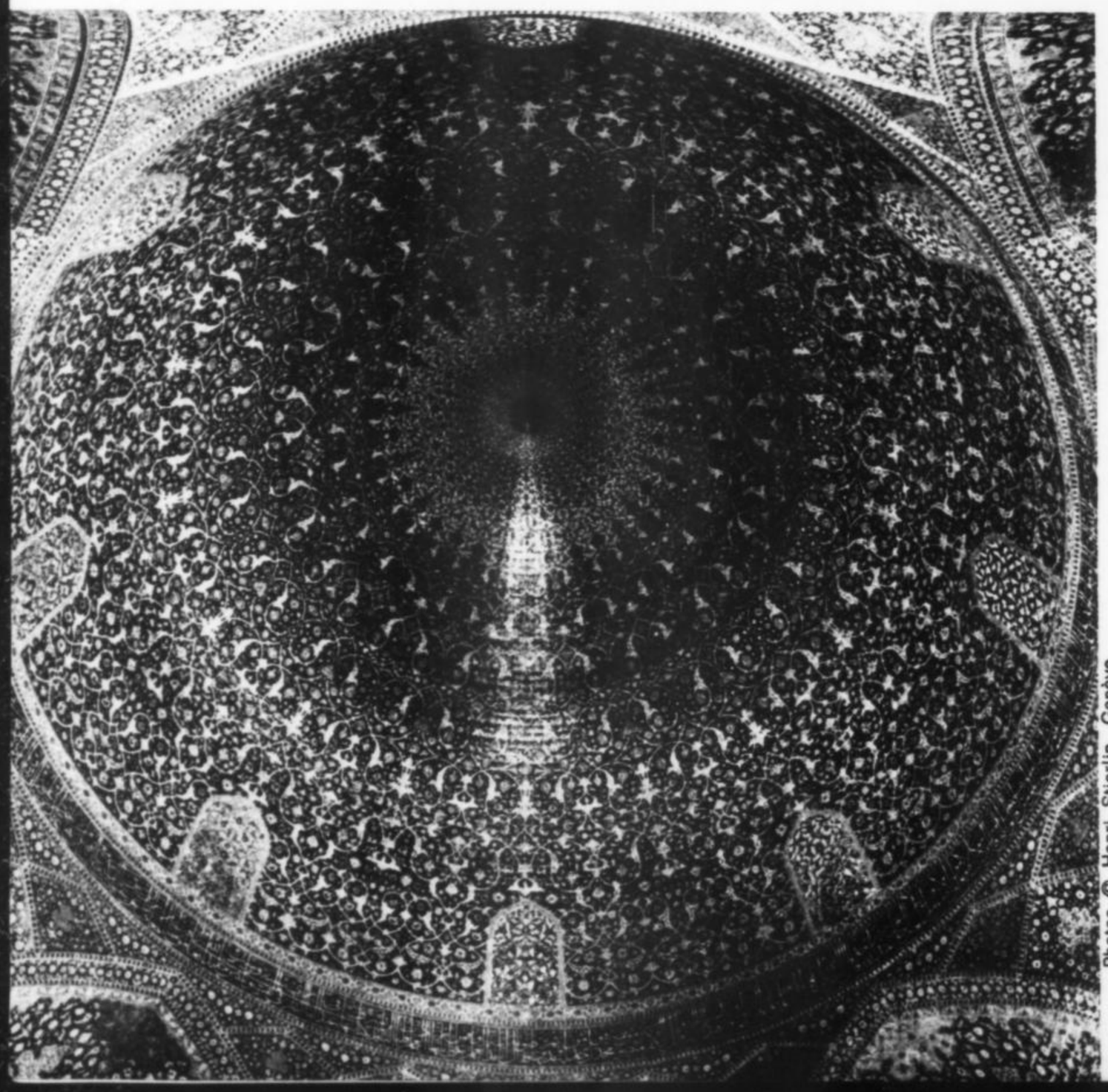


The mosques of Isfahan are world-famous for their gracefulness and the extraordinary interplay of geometric design, calligraphic form, architectural line and light and shadow. The view of the dome of the Royal mosque, photo opposite, with its decoration of brilliant enamel tiles and Arabic calligraphy symbolizes the Persian notion of "Jamal" or Divine Beauty. Below, interior of Royal mosque dome. Here a soft ray of light filters gently onto the exquisite decoration and openwork windows. Above, the dome of the Lutfullah mosque (early 17th century). Photographed from directly underneath, the gracefully curving arch of the dome, as if by magic, is transformed into a straight line. Depending on the hour of the day, the colours of the vaulted ceiling change from cream to rose.



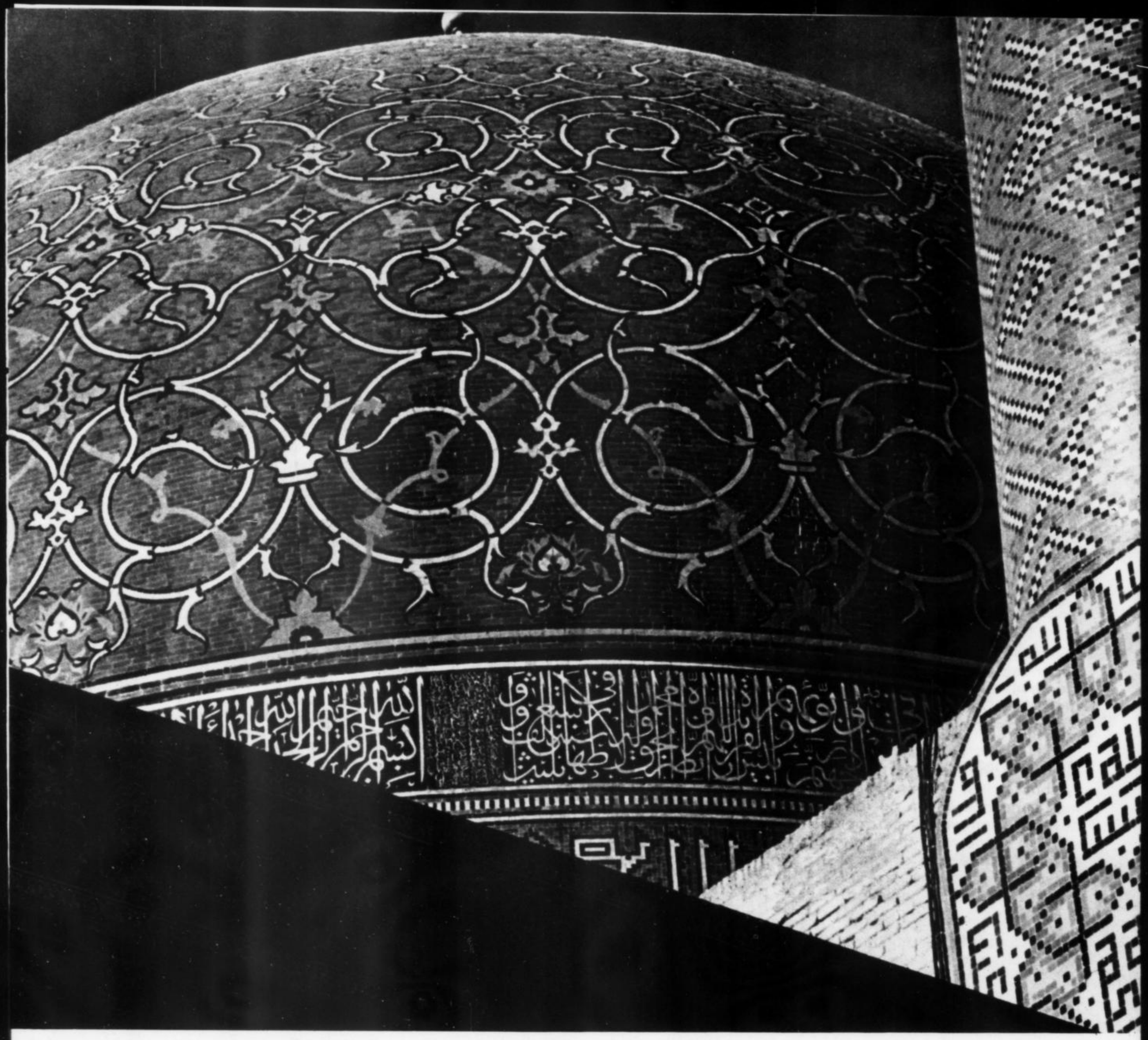
Photos © Henri Stierlin, Genève

SACRED ART *(Continued)*

spiritualized entities whose representation in concrete forms and images corresponded much more closely to the Christian icons of Christ and the Virgin Mary than to the statues of divinities in ancient religions.

During the Islamic period the connexion between art and religion has become even more firmly established. The craft guilds created early on in Islamic cities were closely connected with Sufism, the name by which Islamic mysticism came to be known from the 8th or 9th century A.D. onwards. This link still survives in certain places and the masters of the guilds become initiated into the mysteries of Sufism, learning the metaphysical and cosmological doctrines which underlie the symbolism of Islamic art.

Before industrialization relegated art to galleries and museums there was no such artificial concept as the "fine arts". The daily utensils of ancient



civilizations, which for us today are *objets d'art* to be preserved in museums, are evidence of the organic link that existed between art and life.

In Persian culture the very words used for art—*fann*, *hunar*, and sometimes *san'at*—reveal its universality and its bond with all aspects of life. A Persian says that everything has its *fann*, that is, the correct manner of doing it; or that to do a particular act needs *hunar*, that is, requires a particular skill or art. *San'at*, which nowadays is also used to mean technology, refers to the crafts which are identical with the plastic arts.

It is wrong to speak of arts "and" crafts; the two are one and the same thing. To make a beautiful plate or pot is as much art as to paint a miniature. This unity is particularly evident among the traditional Persians because they are one of the most creative and artistic of peoples, the delicacy of their artistic taste running through every aspect of traditional Persian life, from architecture and gardening to cooking and even to smoking the water pipe.

In Persian culture, during the Islamic period, the Hermetic sciences and particularly alchemy played an intermediary role between the purely metaphysical and cosmological doctrines of Islam and the making of things. To the Islamic mind, the aim of art is to ennoble matter. Similarly, alchemy is a symbolic science of material objects which demonstrates the connexion between minerals and metals and the spiritual and psychic worlds.

Basically, alchemy is a science of the transformation of the soul based on the symbolism of the mineral kingdom, rather than, as many have supposed, a form of pre-chemistry. For this reason it is concerned with the ennobling of matter, with the transmutation of base metal into gold.

The relation between alchemy and art in Persia, as in Islamic art in general, has been profound. The colours used in many works of art, far from being dependent merely upon artistic whim, are related to their alchemical symbolism.

Through alchemy and similar cosmological sciences, Islam created an ambience that was Islamic in both form and content, in which religious and spiritual principles were embodied in matter, in the world that surrounds man in his everyday life, with a consequently deep influence upon his whole attitude of mind.

The sacred art of Islam is related in both form and spirit to the Divine Word as revealed in the Koran. The Word having been revealed as a book, rather than as a human being as in Christianity, sacred art is concerned with the letters and the sounds of the Holy Book.

Islamic sacred art is above all expressed in mosque architecture and

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calligraphy which are inextricably related to the meaning and form of the Koran and may be said to "flow" from it.

The space created inside a mosque, far from being arbitrary and accidental, is deliberately planned to remove those blocks and tensions that might prevent the Word from spreading in a limitless and harmonious space, a space filled with peace and equilibrium in which the Spirit is everywhere and not localized in a particular icon or statue.

Mosque architecture, therefore, derives from the spirit of the Koran, regardless of the fact that certain building techniques were borrowed from Sassanid, Byzantine and other sources. The outer shapes of mosques reflect symbolically the different Divine Names and Qualities *(asmâ' wa sifât)*, the dome corresponding to the Divine Beauty *(jamal)* and minarets to the Divine Majesty *(jalal)*.

Many varied architectural styles were developed according to the ethnic genius of the people involved, but a profound relationship exists between these styles; such widely separated buildings as the mosque of Cordova, the Jâmi' mosque of Isfahan and the Delhi mosque are united within a single spiritual universe.

Calligraphy is similarly very closely related to the Koran in its forms and symbolism. In Islamic art calligraphy has made possible a powerful decorative art form which also represents a spiritual style. In the typical tiled mosque architecture of Persia the two basic forms of sacred art, architecture and calligraphy, are reunited.

A remarkable feature of Islamic architecture, almost unique in the history of art, is that, early on, it reached a peak at which it has remained to our own day. Despite certain variations a permanence and continuity link the Damghan mosque, in north-east Iran, with traditional contemporary mosques.

The traditional Persian home is a kind of extension of the mosque in the sense that it perpetuates its purity and simplicity. The ritual cleanliness of the carpets on which one can pray and on which one goes barefoot, the "emptiness" of the traditional furnitureless rooms, and other elements, relate house to mosque in spirit.

The minor arts too have their importance because they put the "seal of the sacred" upon even the most common of everyday objects that surround man in his daily life. Rugs are a recapitulation of paradise, enclosed in a frame and looking inward towards the centre like the courtyard and the Persian garden.

Miniatures, so closely linked with book illustrations, are an extension of calligraphy and again recall the states of paradise. Even traditional dress in all its forms is designed to facilitate the performance of Islamic rites.

The spiritual force behind the poetry and music of all Islamic peoples is the chanting and recitation of the Koran, an audible form of sacred art *par excellence*. The Persian language as we know it today was a creation of the early Islamic period and thus was more affected, especially in its poetry, by the spirit and form of the Koran than even Arabic whose poetic tradition was already formed at the time of the Koranic revelation.

Coupled with the poetic genius of the Persians, this fact explains the extraordinary richness of religious and mystical poetry in the Persian language. Though not sacred art in the direct sense, Persian poetry, especially Persian Sufi poetry, is intimately connected with the Koran. If Arabic is the language of the Word—the language of God as He spoke through Gabriel to the Prophet of Islam—then it could be said that Persian is the language of the angels, the language of paradise. The rhythm and rhyme of Persian poetry reflect the echo of the Koran in the minds of the men who created this poetry.

Persian music finds its origins in the music of the ancient Aryan peoples and is akin to the Greek music of Pythagoras' day. The banning of the social side of music during the Islamic period meant that it turned inwards to become a contemplative art. In its purely musical content, as well as in relation to Sufi poetry with which it has always been intimately linked, Persian music is a powerful aid to the achievement of the contemplative states of Sufism. It is no accident that, over the centuries, most Persian musicians have been associated with Sufism.

The Persian art form that comes nearest to the liturgical and sacred theatre of other traditions is the *ta' ziyah* or passion play, peculiar to the Shi'ite school. Usually these plays depict scenes and events of the tragedy of Karbela [the martyrdom of Husain, son of Fatimah, the daughter of Mohammed] although other themes have been treated.

An essential characteristic of the *ta'ziyah* is that the audience is as much a part of the play as the actors, and both participate with all their body and soul in the events of sacred history recounted on the stage.

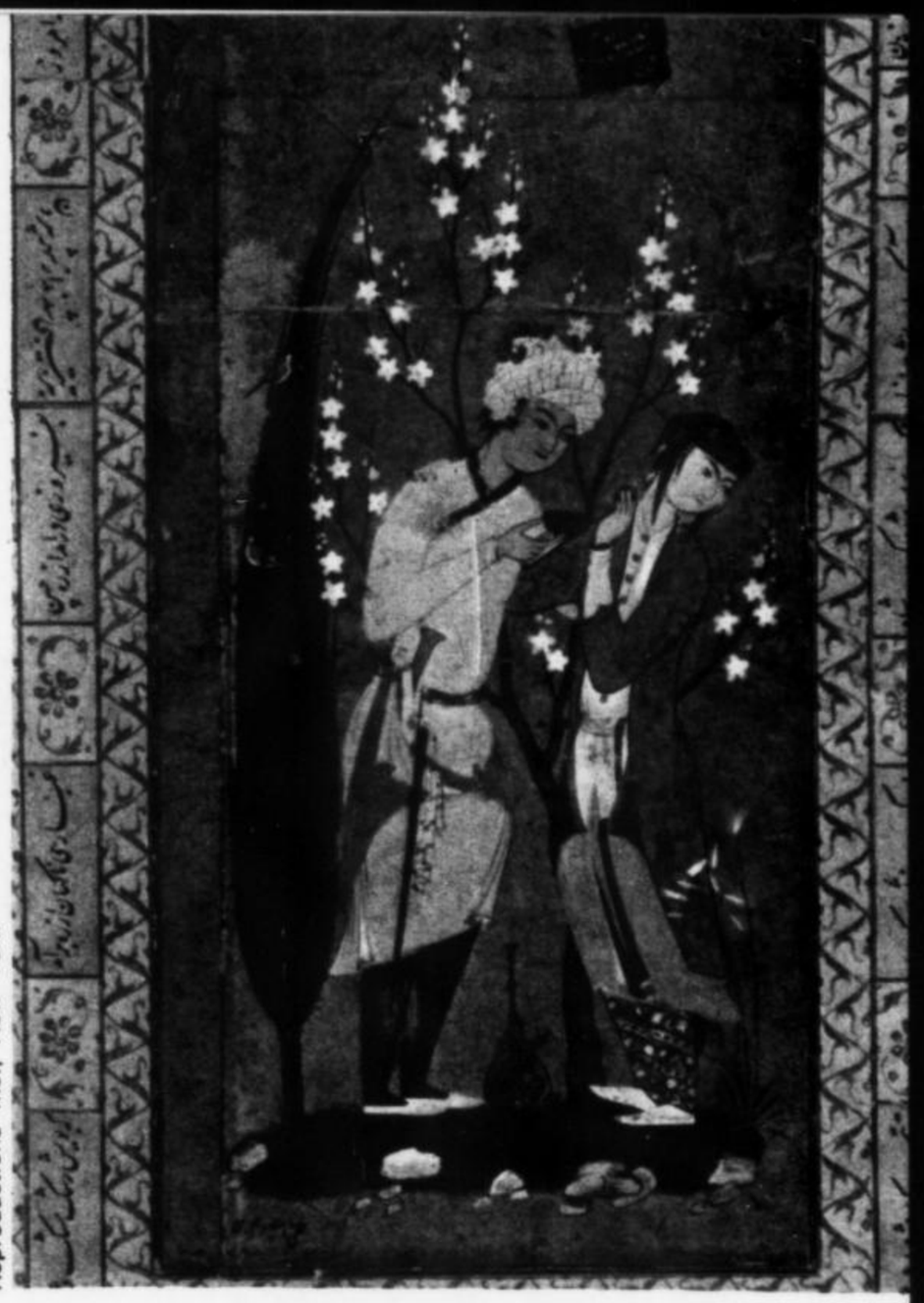
The same holds true of the *samâ*, the spiritual concert of the Sufis. To be simply a spectator without the spiritual preparation at a session of *samâ* would alter the whole nature and meaning of the performance.

Persian art in general and sacred art in particular have left a heritage of incredible richness. With their great artistic talent and taste the Persians have succeeded in creating an art that is both spiritual and sensuous, that reveals the beauty of this world as well as its fleeting nature. This heritage is still a living reality for the vast majority of Persians and is of inestimable value for the whole world. ■

Photo © Giraudon, Paris

Mohammed, mounted on his human-headed steed, Burak, observes the flames of Hell. According to Islamic tradition, Mohammed ascended to the Seven Heavens where he viewed the Pleasures of Paradise and the Punishments of Hell. This 15th century Persian miniature by an unknown artist is from the "Mi'raj Nama" (Book of the Ascension) now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, in Paris.

Photo © Editions du Chêne, Paris and Shorewood Reproductions Inc., New York



Persian symbol for the slender grace and beauty of youth, the cypress often figures, as here, in miniatures that depict young lovers. Executed about 1575, this painting is by Mohammedi, the most gifted artist of the Safavi court at the end of Shah Tahmasp's reign. The work is preserved in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

Photo © Sabine Weiss-Rapho, Paris

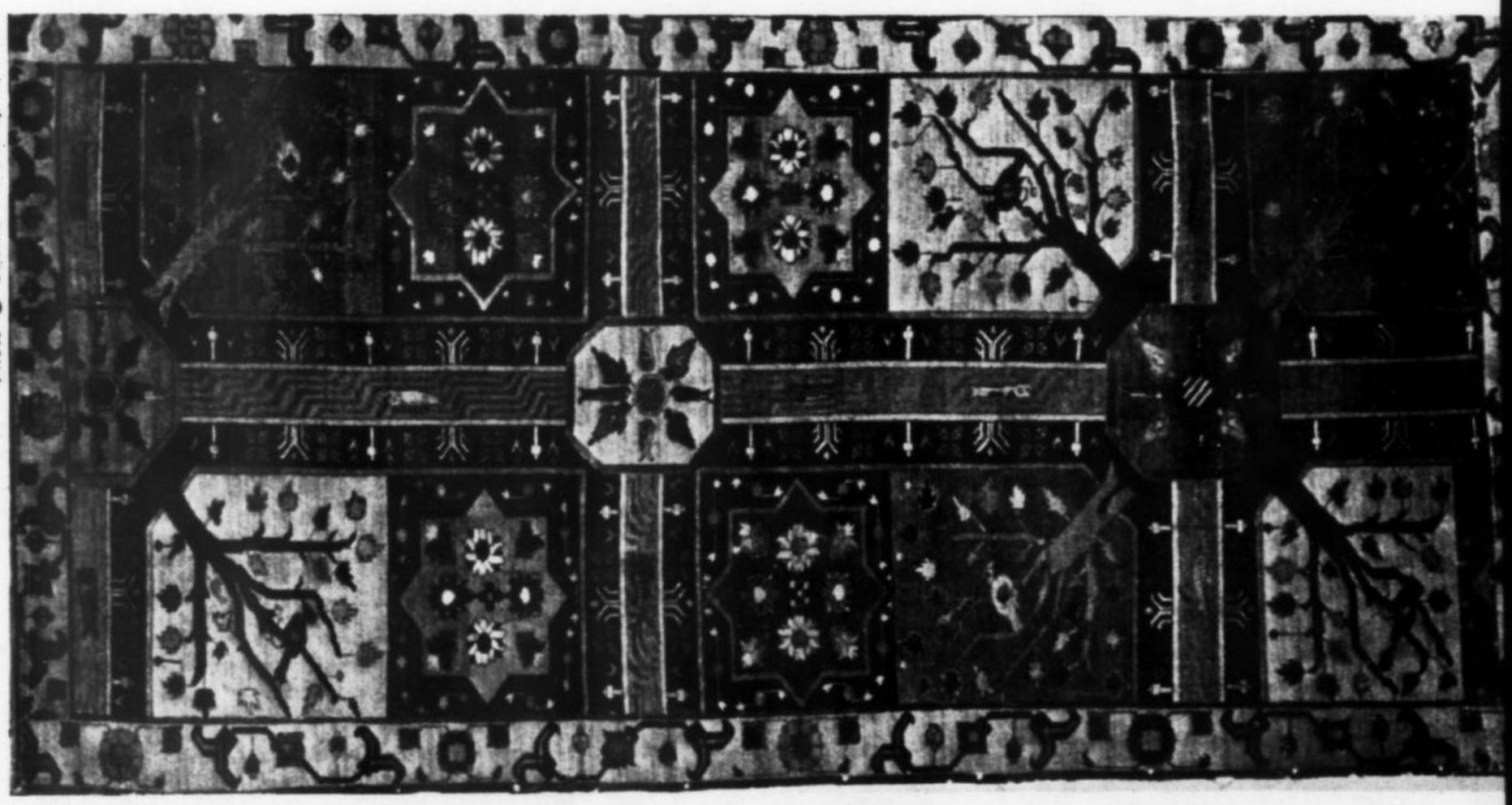
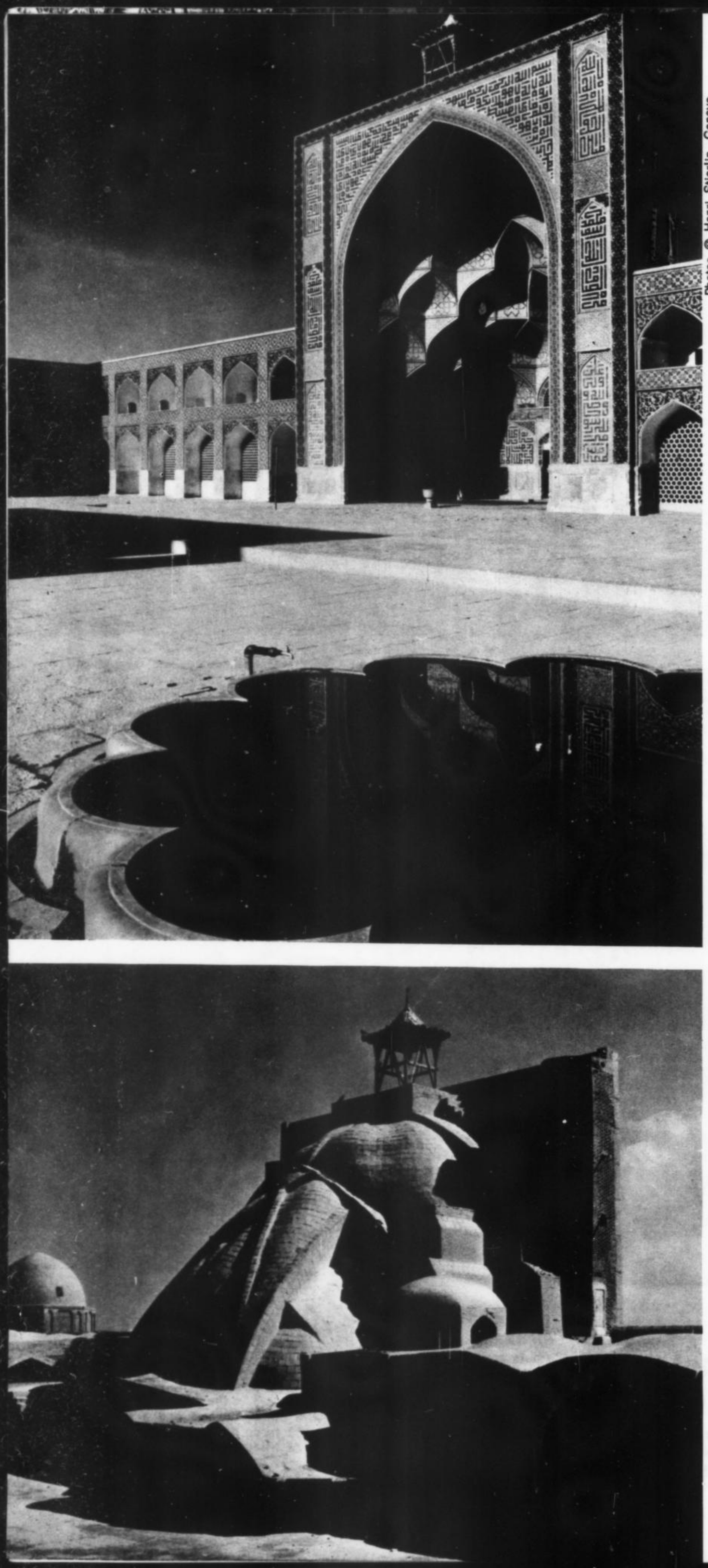


Photo © British Museum, London

Garden carpets and carpet gardens

Carpets and miniatures are two forms of traditional Persian art which often depict an earthly image of Paradise as a verdant garden where the chosen recline on beautiful carpets. In painting left, "Presentation of Khosrow's Portrait to Shirin" (a story told in the "Book of Kings"), the garden of paradise is graced with pools, flowers and a carpet—itself the woven image of a garden. The painting is by Ruhallah Mirak, an artist from Khorassan, famous too in his day as an athlete and wrestler. Right, 17th century carpet with its garden of trees, lilies and streams with fish provides another image of the paradise promised by the Prophet. This carpet is now in the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris.



Photos © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

Photo left, recessed honeycomb forms and tiled facade of the archway over the northern porch of the Friday mosque at Isfahan are mirrored in the waters of the basin where the faithful perform their ablutions. How such a complex structure was actually built is shown in the photo below left, taken from behind the facade. The splendour of the Friday mosque and the city's other majestic edifices may explain the Iranian saying: "Isfahan is half the world". In the Friday mosque, rebuilt in 1121 on the site of a Seljuk mosque, the constructions and decorations of the Timurid and Turkmen periods are preserved intact.

COLOUR PAGES

Opposite

Sheathed in an intricate pattern of mosaic faience, the 14th century Masjid-i-Jami (Friday mosque) at Yazd, central Iran, is a splendid example of Persian mosque embellishment. Just visible above the richly decorated facade are the bases of the mosque's twin minarets—the highest in Iran. Other mosques and mausoleums in Yazd are decorated with delicate and rich stucco relief and from the city skyline rise minarets and many tall towers, called "badgir", devised to bring moving air, cooled underground, into the buildings as relief from the intense heat of summer.

Photo Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier

Centre Pages

Left

Top left, 12th century A.D. glass camel found at Gorgan near the south-eastern corner of the Caspian sea. Formerly known as Astarabad, Gorgan was a caravan staging point and a trading centre for the nomadic tribes of the north, famous for its pottery. Top right, 9th century B.C. pottery unicorn from Azerbaijan. Representations of the unicorn are extremely rare in Persian art of this period, the favourite animal subjects for potters being horses, stags and ibex. Bottom, a gold rhyton (goblet) found at Hamadan in western Iran, and said to date from the 5th century B.C. The winged lion, with the traditional rounded ears, sparse mane extending to the animal's flanks and wings with three rows of feathers, is a masterpiece of the goldsmith's art. The lip of the goblet is embellished with buds and lotus flowers. Rhytons were originally fashioned from the horns of animals, but were later made in terracotta, gold and silver.

Photos Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier
Archaeological Museum, Teheran

Right

Floral patterns and geometrical designs executed in brilliant and harmonious tilework grace this minaret rising from the sanctuary of Shah Abdul Azim at Ray, near Teheran. The mausoleum has been a place of pilgrimage since medieval times, but the present building with its huge gilded dome dates from the 19th century. Ray, formerly one of the great cities of Iran, rose to special eminence after the 8th century, rivalled in western Asia only by Damascus and Baghdad. In the 10th century, the Arab geographer Yaqut described it as a city of extraordinary beauty, built largely of fired brick and brilliantly ornamented with blue faience.

Photo Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier

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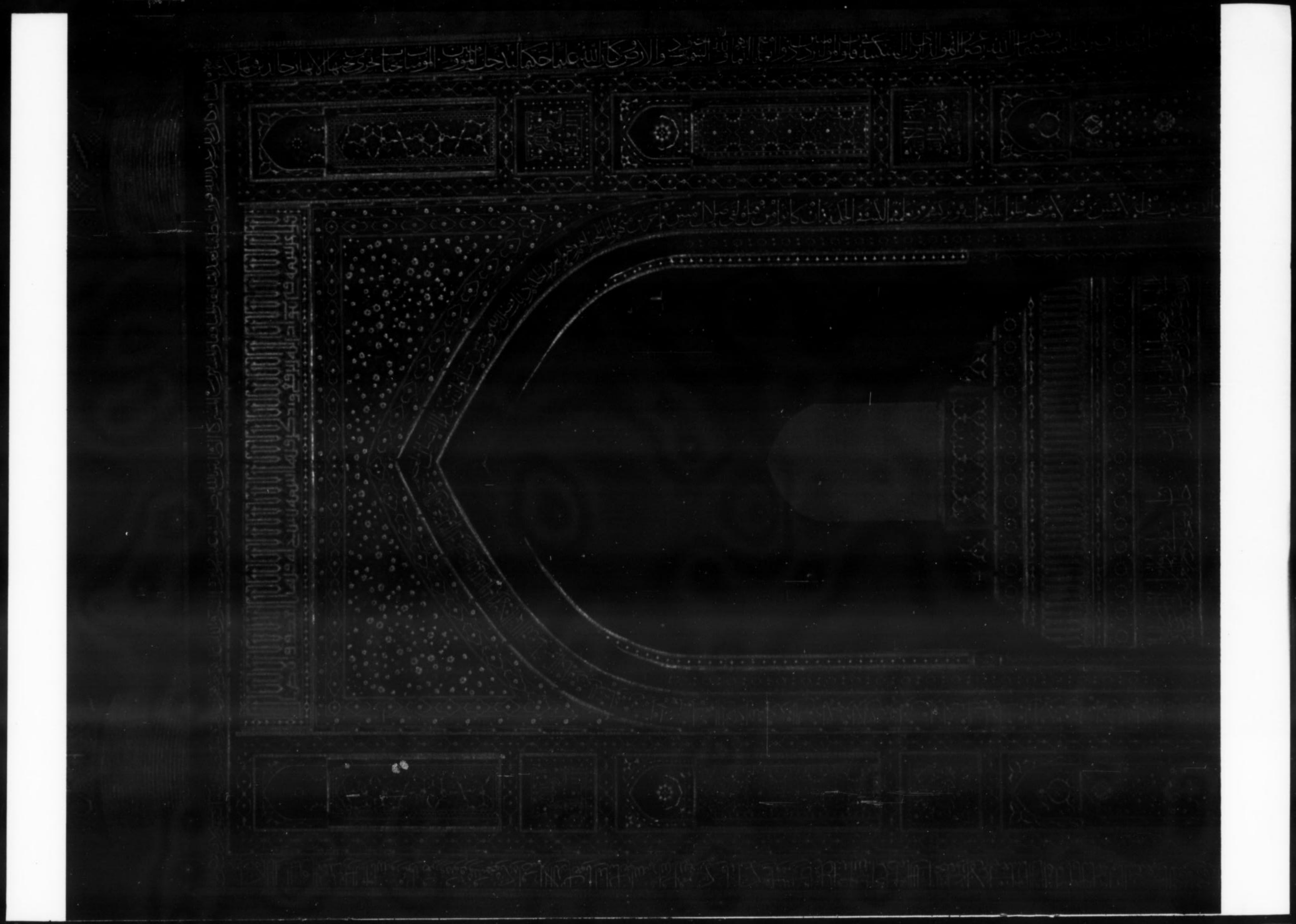
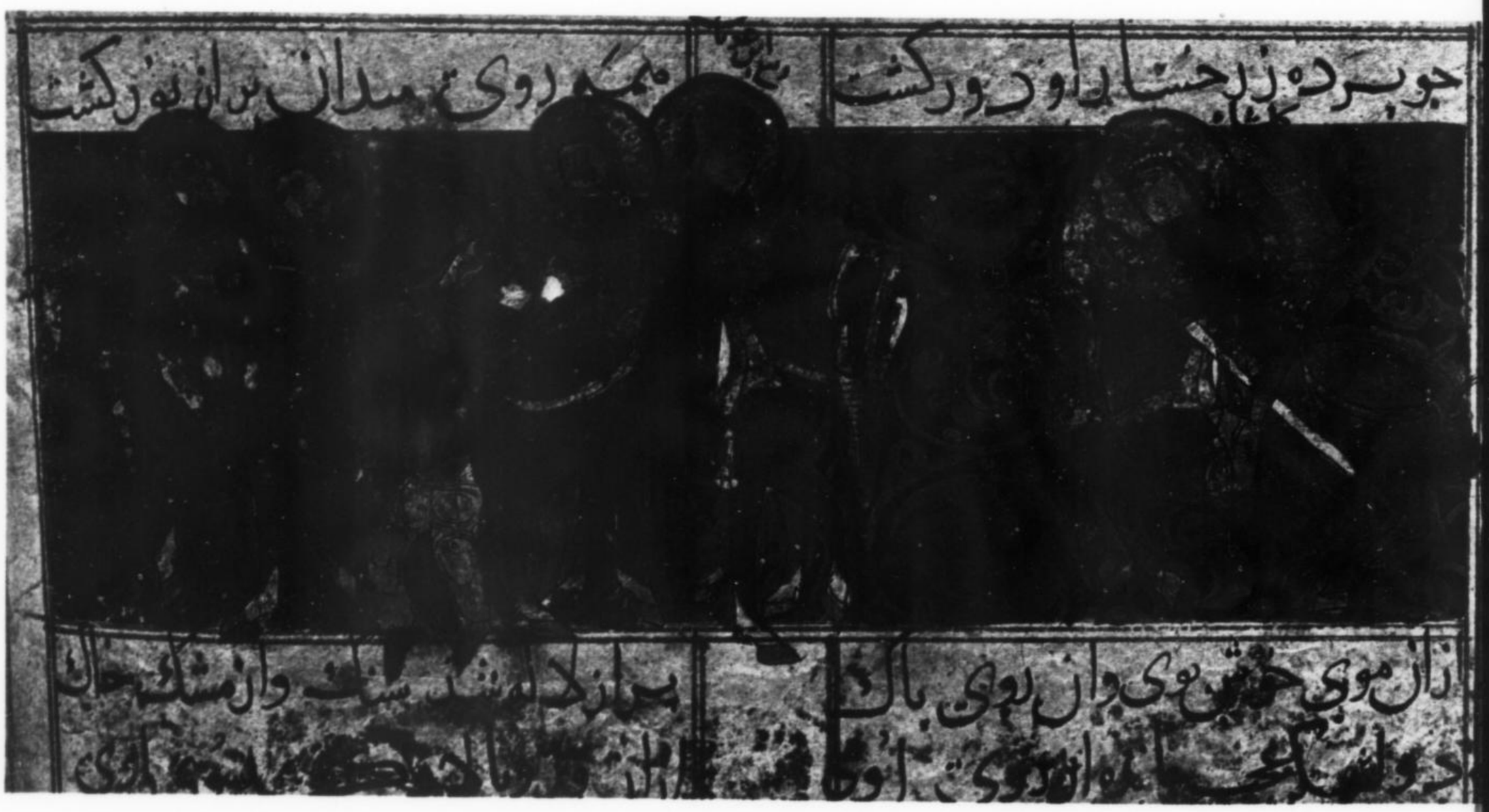


نیزهٔ او بر و حمله کرد | سوار عرب ورقهٔ شیر
ز نیزه بر مرد لشکر شکر | ز کین دل آمد ببازوش بر
بازوش بر هر دو پهلو بدوخت | چو بر ساخت آن زخم جانش بس

گر پاره زد بانگ را بر سمند | پس آواز کردش ببانگی بلند



چو پرده ز رخسار او دور گشت | همه روی میدان بر آن نور گشت

زان موی خوش بوی وان روی پاک | پر از لاله شد سنگ و از مشک خاک

Colour page

Two of the 71 miniatures illustrating a 13th century Persian manuscript of the romance of Varghe and Golshah, discovered some years ago in the storerooms of the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul, Turkey. Top, Varghe attacks a warrior from Aden, piercing his arm with his lance. Bottom, the wounded Varghe is taken prisoner by Rabi-ben Adnan who is mounted on a crimson horse. Golshah, his beloved, disguised as a warrior rides to his rescue. The couplet accompanying this illustration describes how "the battlefield was bathed in light when Golshah unveiled her countenance." The miniatures are symbolic: where the poet speaks of two armies, the miniaturist shows only four horsemen, and there is no attempt to portray the horses in "natural" colours. See also photos p. 29.

Photos © Ara Güler - Topkapi Museum, Istanbul

THE ROMANCE OF VARGHE AND GOLSHAH

by A.S. Melikian-Chirvani

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TEN years ago, a 13th century Persian manuscript, the only surviving copy of a romance written shortly after 1000 A.D., was discovered in the store rooms of the Topkapi Saray Museum in Istanbul.

The 71 miniatures of great beauty that accompany the text constitute the only known complete set of illustrations to a Persian romance painted before the 14th century.

The discovery was clearly of great significance to art historians and to specialists in Persian literature. But more than this, the manuscript of *Varghe va Golshah*—such is the name of this love story written by one Ayyughi of whom nothing more is known—provides a unique specimen through the pages of which a profound analysis of the very nature of Iranian art can be made.

From earliest times, Iranian art, and for that matter Oriental art in general, has reflected attitudes to the world that are sharply opposed to Western concepts. In handling figurative themes, the Eastern painter or sculptor eliminates anything that might situate his work in time or space.

The king subduing a lion, on the golden plaques found at Zivie, and the procession of winged bulls, on the sides of the golden beakers from the 9th-8th century B.C. Marlik hoard, are not representations of a specific story or event. The postures are stylized and the figures in bas-relief are smoothly modelled and cast no shadows. There is not the slightest suggestion of a landscape or even a realistically drawn plant to remind us of the world as we see it.

At Persepolis, two hundred years later, Iranian sculptors followed much the same rules. Built in the 6th and 5th centuries B.C., this palace represents the ultimate stage of northwestern Iranian art from Marlik and other sites reproduced on a monumental scale.

The winged bulls and lions, all identical, never depart from the idealized model that the sculptors had in mind. Their skill in rendering subtle shades of relief was unsurpassed, yet they applied it not to realistic representation, but to almost calligraphic stylization.

The muscles of the lions' thighs, instead of having that life-like quality so strenously sought after by the Greek sculptors of Pericles' day, are interpreted as idealized double curves. There is no attempt to convey the idea of the wind blowing through the draperies of the royal guards and servants; they are reduced to abstract, geometric patterns.

An almost imperceptible, motionless smile curls the lips of the faces, seen in profile, and the almond-shaped eyes seem to be looking into some far-distant "beyond". Not one wrinkle stirs their brow, not one stray hair disturbs the symmetry of their headdress, not one distinctive feature separates one face from another. They are not individuals but archetypes from another world.

It would be hard to imagine a more vivid contrast to the principles of Western art, as established in the Greece of Pericles' day, which sought out and stressed the individuality of every man.

The art of the East produced archetypes, that of the West produced portraits, and Greek art sought to portray traits of psychological make-up and character. The quality of anatomical observation, the skill in rendering depth and space, in creating the optical illusion of perspective, in bringing life to subject matter were its criteria—the exact opposite, in short, of all that Eastern art was aiming at.

The conquest of Iran by Alexander, the advent of a Greek dynasty and the subsequent influx of Westerners might have deflected Iran from her course and converted her to the naturalistic branch of art favoured by Europe.

This was not to be. Hellenistic art did appear, presumably under the Seleucid rulers, and still flourished in early Parthian times, but it barely rose above the level of third rate provincial production. The adoption of these Western principles of art ended in total failure, as if attitudes so utterly alien to the Oriental perception of the world were an artificial graft which failed to "take".

With the advent of the Sassanian dynasty, in 224 A.D., Iran returned to Oriental sources and principles for good. The horsemen carved in relief on the rocks of Fars or executed in repoussé on silver bowls move in a spaceless and timeless world. Many more styles were to be evolved in Iran, but throughout history the permanent attitudes underlying all artistic creativity were to remain unchanged.

An art form such as this, which strives to eliminate the inessential from every scene and the fortuitous individuality from every face so as to reduce the "apparent world" to archetypes and idealized models, must

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

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necessarily be an art of signs and symbols. It is an art of writing in three dimensions, just as calligraphy is in two dimensions.

Little is left to us of Sassanian calligraphy except for some rather special lapidary inscriptions. But we know that from the earliest times, Iran was to attach ever-increasing importance to that supreme form of abstraction. There is the pure calligraphy of 9th and 10th century pottery from Susa in the south-west to Neyshabur in Khorassan. There are the monumental inscriptions woven, as it were, into the very texture of 14th century mosques and mausoleums by laying the bricks to given patterns.

The divine name of Allah is to be seen in alternately orientated directions as if the architect had set out to translate into his brick idiom the vertiginous mysticism of the Sufi calling out the ninety-nine names of God. Nowhere else in the world and at no other time has the call to the divinity been so wedded to the very structure of a building.

If we turn to literature, we find that these attitudes, so striking in plastic art, are directly paralleled in its written forms. Both express the same perception of the world.

The great importance of the *Varghe va Golshah* is that it provides us with the earliest surviving work in which we can perceive the full measure of this parallelism. It shows clearly that Persian literature is a literature of themes, just as Persian art is an art of stereotype images.

The author of *Varghe va Golshah* tells us that he borrowed his story from "the books of the Arabs". In fact, a brief analysis shows that he has woven into his book themes taken from the Iranian repertoire. The same themes also occur in the second earliest Persian romance, *Vis u Ramin*, written by Gorgani about the middle of the 11th century.

The two stories both tell of young children brought up together who fall in love. In both cases, the girl is given in a marriage of convenience to a prince she does not love, but she manages to avoid the nuptial act. Gorgani relates the same story of the king to whom she was denied and who takes her by force, just as in Ayyughi's romance, and of the young lover who sets out in search of his beloved and reaches the castle in which she is imprisoned.

The analogies between the two stories extend to the secondary characters—the confidante, the two mysterious riders who cross the lovers' path and the magician met by chance. This is all the more remarkable as the two works could be expected to be entirely different. Gorgani says that he translated his work from a Pahlavi original, not from an Arab romance, and the society he describes is that of feudal Iran in pre-Islamic times. Ayyughi purports to depict bedouin nomads roaming the deserts of Arabia in the times of the prophet Mohammed. Yet the similarities between many of the central themes bear witness to the compelling attraction of a traditional repertoire.

Photo © Topkapi Museum, Istanbul

Indeed, invention and innovation are not the primary aim of the sculptor, the painter or the writer. Their attitude is rather the reverse; they take up themes that have been handled by others before them and fit them into a pattern that pleases them.

This attitude is closely related to other fundamental attitudes that can be only briefly mentioned—that of the disciple striving to follow his spiritual guide's teaching in order to master it fully before pursuing his own meditation; that of the poet for whom art is above all a form of knowledge, or rather a way of transmitting knowledge.

Spiritual enlightenment is not a story that is invented; it is a discipline into which one is initiated, a model to be followed, a language to be mastered.

These are the concepts underlying all forms of creativity in Iran. And this is why strict parallels can be found between the rules of literary and plastic composition. The story of *Varghe va Golshah* is the most ancient work in which this analogy is apparent.

A comparison between the illustrations and the episodes they depict reveals that the painter's first concern was to take up existing motifs and then adapt them to the story.

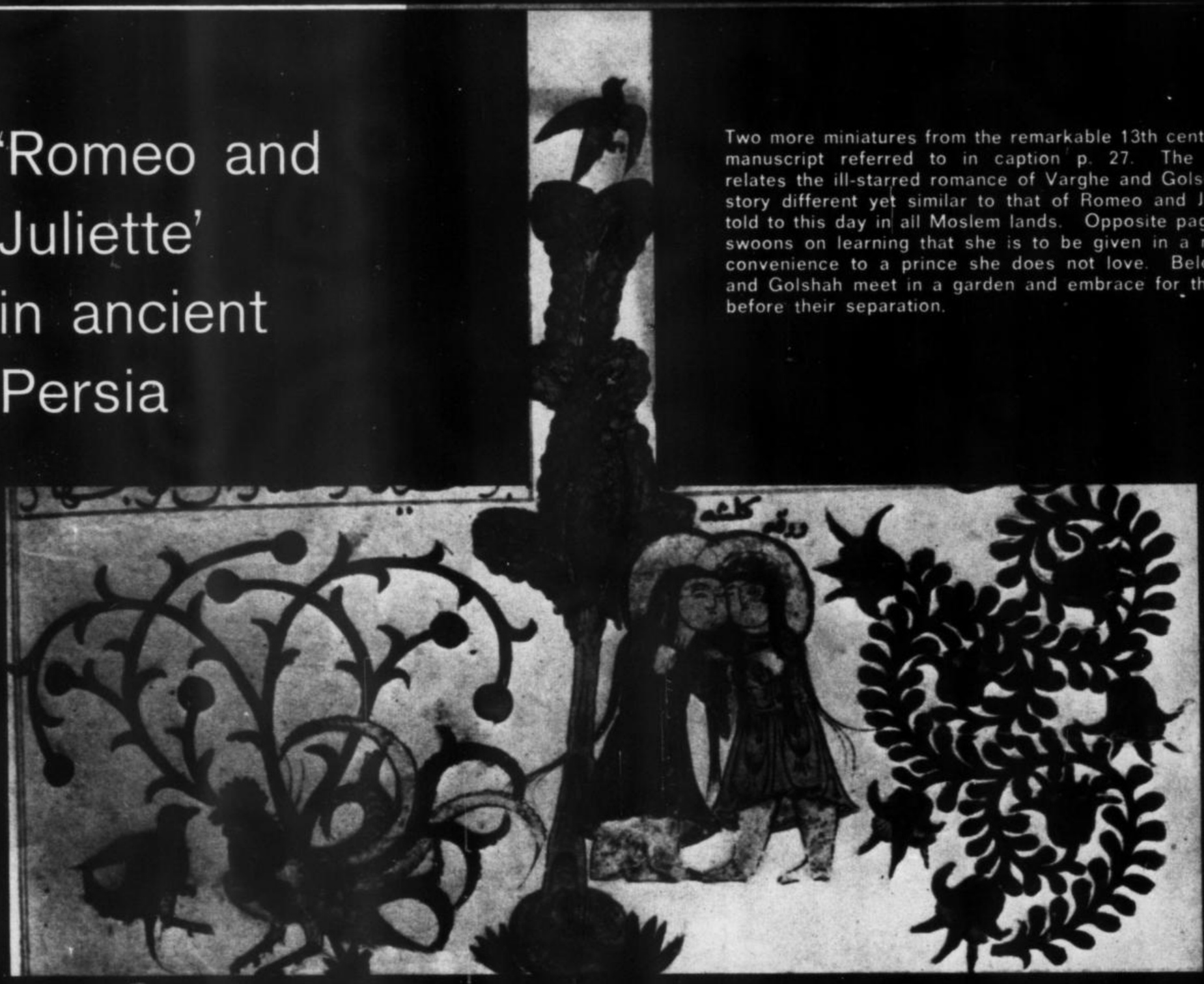
The pretext for the image may be very slight and on occasion the painter is in contradiction with the author. He shows us two men fighting where the author tells of two armies engaged in pitched battle. He opens his cycle of illustrations with an arcaded bazaar typical of a medieval town, which in turn is symbolized by four professional men, whereas the author speaks of Bedouins camping in the desert.

These discrepancies reveal the existence of an ancient and powerful pictorial tradition which in part antedates the literary tradition to which it is allied in these tales.

Even more than the choice of recurring themes, the way in which both writer and artist treat them reveals the basic similarity of their artistic approach. The author never attempts to characterize an episode by specific detail. His descriptions of events invariably follow set patterns much as the painter's images follow set schemes. The psychology of the individual does not concern him any more than the rendering of individualized features does the painter. He is interested in fundamental, almost conceptual attitudes.

We are told that the two adolescents are in love, that armies fight, but no background details are supplied. Liter-

'Romeo and Juliette' in ancient Persia



Two more miniatures from the remarkable 13th century Persian manuscript referred to in caption p. 27. The manuscript relates the ill-starred romance of Varghe and Golshah, a love story different yet similar to that of Romeo and Juliette, and told to this day in all Moslem lands. Opposite page, Golshah swoons on learning that she is to be given in a marriage of convenience to a prince she does not love. Below, Varghe and Golshah meet in a garden and embrace for the last time before their separation.

Photo © Unesco - Unesco World Art Series "Turkey Ancient Miniatures"

ary description reveals a stylization of thought that matches plastic stylization to a nicety.

Two lovers talking to each other speak in turn, according to a regular rhythm, using the same words and ideas, much as the miniatures show them leaning symmetrically towards each other in identical garb. References to nature are expressed in metaphors as abstract, as remote from individual experience as the painter's mythical, symmetric plants, standing out against a monochrome or scroll-covered background.

One of the strangest aspects of this stylized perception is revealed in the use of certain numbers. Quantities are never selected haphazardly and are limited by the author to the figures: 2, 3, 4, 10, 20, 30, 40, 60, 100 and 1,000; to which should be added: 6, 7, 12, 14, 16, 32, 36, 48, 72 and a few others to be found in other works.

The same quantities, oddly enough, appear to have been used by painters; a house has twelve or thirty crenellated battlements; a plant has twelve leaves. In the first illustration, in which the painter depicts the baker in his shop, an irresistible instinct compels him to portray 14 loaves hanging from the ceiling. We must, however, beware of reading a symbolic meaning into these numbers any more than in the fact that Varghe encountered 40 thieves along his way. It is simply an extreme form of stylization which it would not be an exaggeration to term the aesthetics of numbers.

Just as events follow idealized patterns, so do faces correspond to an archetype described at length by Ayyughi and other Persian poets. This is a face rounded like the full moon, pink as a rose, with a tiny, cornelian mouth, arched eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes and with two pigtails framing it. A face of pure beauty, it is to be seen among the ruins of the IIth century palace at Ghazni and in eastern Iranian Buddhist art. The face is both male and female, although occasionally the poets spoke of the downy beard of a young man or the full white beard of an elder.

An art such as this could only evolve slowly through gradual modification of the rules of art and not as the result of the inventiveness of individual artists. Historically speaking it was rich .and diversified, but because it followed a canon, it is difficult to identify its authors when the colophons or the signatures are lost.

In fact, this is of very little importance since the criteria by which we judge Iranian or Oriental art are not those we use for assessing the art of the West. Indeed, they are diametrically opposed. In Europe the artist is admired for his inventive ability, in Iran he is praised for having equalled or even surpassed his master, but always with reference to the model. The West admires a feeling of real life instilled into beings and nature and the artist's ability to capture visual impressions, even if only impressions of light.

Iran glorifies the perfection of a calligraphic stroke, the penmanship, the order and rhythm of structure. To create a physical impression of relief, light and shade, to suggest a personal feeling in painting or poetry is meaningless, almost absurd, in a world aiming for the Absolute and therefore devoted to abstraction in the real sense.

Significantly, Iran was to turn to individualistic portrayals only on the eve of decadence, when her culture, its content drained of life, was undergoing a process of westernization. And what was true of Iran was valid for the whole of the Eastern world.

The story is told of a Jesuit painter who had been commissioned to produce a portrait of the Emperor Chien-Lung. At last came the day when the portrait was unveiled before the Emperor. For a time he remained absorbed in silence. At long last he asked: "What do those black strokes on the cheek signify?" "Sire, they are shadow", the Reverend Father explained. "There is no shadow on the Emperor's face", came the reply. Nor was any shadow ever to be seen on the full moon faces of traditional Iranian art. ■

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Photo Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier

Hewn from the solid rock of a cliff face at Naksh-e Rostam near Persepolis (above) is the tomb of Darius I, ruler of the Persian Empire from 521 to 486 B.C. On the carving above the entrance, Darius is carried on a huge platformlike throne by his subjects. Rock reliefs below the tomb date from the time of the Sassanian dynasty (226 A.D. to mid-7th century).

CYRUS'S CYLINDER. Few rulers in ancient history have earned the renown and respect accorded to Cyrus the Great, founder, 2,500 years ago, of the Persian Empire. One of the important sources for the history of Cyrus is the cuneiform writing on the Cylinder of Cyrus (right) discovered during excavations at Babylon which Cyrus entered in 539 B.C. In this written message to the Babylonians, dated 538-529 B.C., Cyrus declared: "I (am) Cyrus, the king of the world, the king of Babylon, the king of Shumer and Akkad, the king of the four regions . . . When I entered Tintar [ancient name of Babylon] peacefully . . . I established my sovereignty in the palace of the princes. Marduk [the Babylonian national god] inclined the noble hearts of the people of Babylon towards me, for I was daily attentive to his worship . . ." Cyrus did in fact scrupulously respect the Babylonian religions and repaired the temples. In 539 B.C. he authorized the return to Palestine of the Jews deported by Nebuchadrezzar and arranged for the rebuilding of the Hebrew temple in Jerusalem.

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The stone tablets of Cyrus and Darius

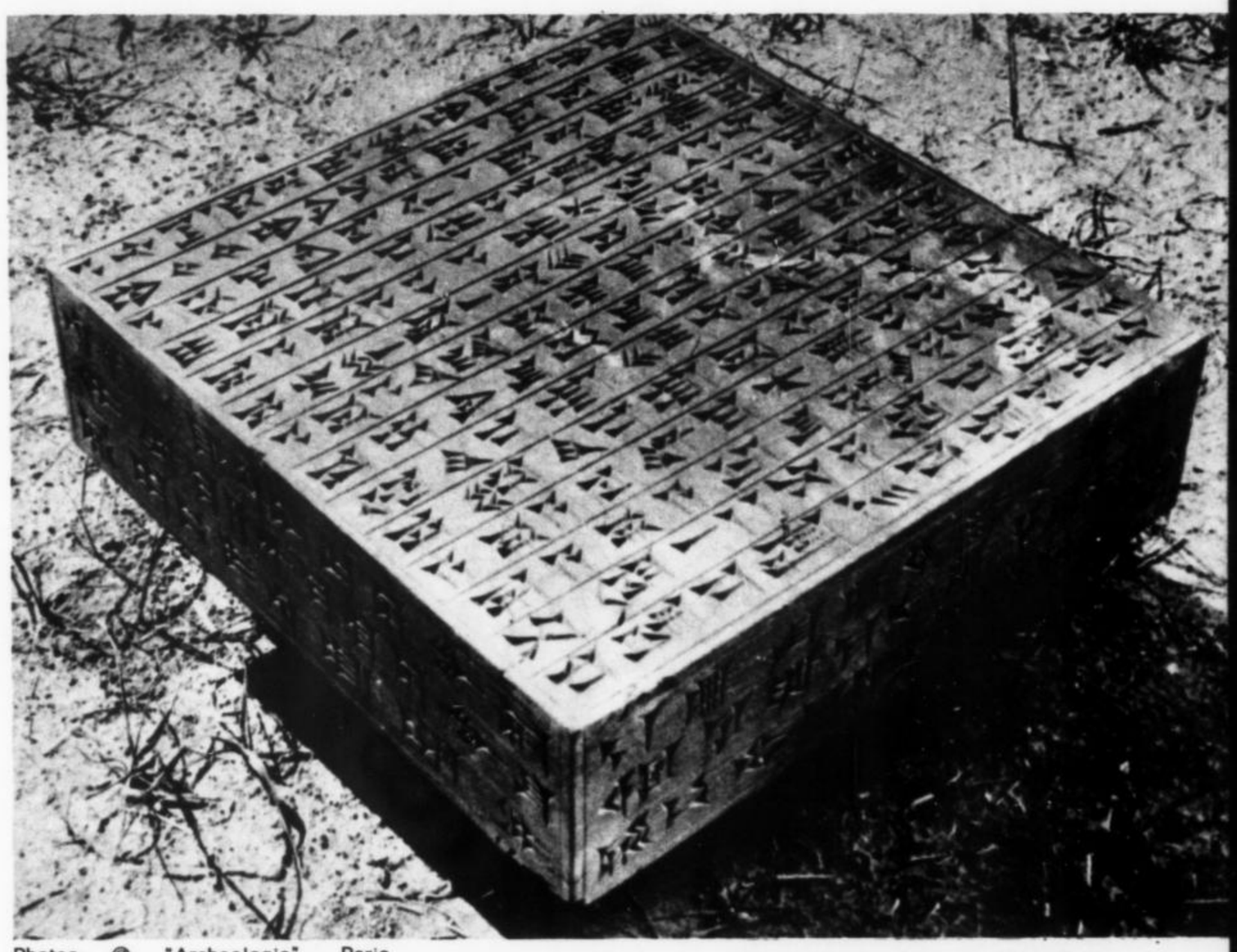
The ruins of ancient Susa, administrative capital of Darius I and his successors, probed and uncovered by archaeologists since 1884, have yielded a rich harvest of historical remains and artefacts. But last year the Palace of Darius had yet another surprise in store for the archaeologist.

A French mission, in collaboration with Iran's Service for the Protection of Historic Monuments, was excavating the foundations of the palace walls, a preliminary to their partial restoration, when they came across two stone tablets inscribed with cuneiform characters. As they soon realized, they had discovered the stones inscribed with the charter of the foundation of the palace of Darius, placed beneath the walls at the end of the 6th century B.C.

The tablets of grey marble, in a perfect state of preservation, were engraved on their six sides. The one placed under the east wall of a corridor bore a text in Akkadian —an ancient language of Mesopotamia, used in cuneiform writing from about the 28th to the 1st century B.C. (photo right). The second, recovered from beneath the west wall, was inscribed in Elamite (the language of Elam, an ancient country to the east of Babylon). It is probable that a third tablet with an inscription in ancient Persian—the third official language of the Empire—was also placed in the foundations.

Not only has the discovery brought to light a new text dating from the Achaemenid epoch with, in the Elamite text, a dozen new words to add to the lexicon of this language. It has also given to a millimetre the length of the royal cubit under Darius (33.60 cm.), and has confirmed beyond all doubt that the section of the palace where the finds were made was the work of Darius.

Cuneiform inscriptions from the sides of the tablets uncovered beneath the palace of Darius I at Susa. Top, the Akkadian text with more widely spaced characters than the Elamite version beneath it.



Photos © "Archeologia", Paris

Above, the tablet inscribed in Akkadian characters. The translation shows it to be a new and abridged text of the already famous "Charter of the Foundation of the Palace of Darius I at Susa," which had been patiently pieced together by archaeologists from fragments uncovered in many parts of the ruins of Susa.

Photo © British Museum, London

Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

Persian guards sculpted in stone on the ceremonial staircase leading to the audience hall of Darius I at Persepolis.

THE EPIC OF THE KINGS

Persia's national saga the 'Shah-nama'

by Joseph Santa-Croce

THE *Shah-nama* or the *Book of Kings*, written towards the end of the 10th century by the Persian poet Ferdowsi (or Firdausi), is a work of vast literary wealth and of exceptional moral value. It is indeed an achievement on the grand scale, not only in its sheer length (some fifty thousand couplets) but also in its scope, relating as it does the exploits of the kings who founded Iran.

It soon becomes clear, however, that the *Shah-nama* is more than just an epic tale; it contains full-scale courtly romances as well as a political and moral message. Yet this astonishing diversity in no way detracts from the literary excellence of the work. The author is a poet to his fingertips and a master of a pure and simple style.

Not the least surprising feature of the *Shah-nama* is that, though it was

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written in about 995 A.D., it remains clearly intelligible to the average Iranian of today. Quite apart from the continuing success it enjoys in Iran, its significance for our present day world is strikingly apparent to anyone who cares to study it; in short, it is an extraordinarily topical work.

As the French oriental scholar Henri Massé has pointed out, the period of Persian history covered in the *Book of Kings* stretches over four dynasties of pre-Islamic kings: the king-judges (the Pichdadians), the Kaianid dynasty (a word derived from the old Persian "Kavi" meaning king), the Arsacids (otherwise known as the Ashkanians) and the Sassanian Shahs.

Henri Massé adds that "the first two dynasties are almost wholly legendary, while the third is limited to but a few names. These dynasties are sub-divided into fifty reigns of varying duration which do not, to be sure, correspond to the historical dates". Massé asserts that divisions within this sprawling epic should be based "not on the reigns of individual kings, but on the episodes, the minor epics, which combine to form the whole".

In this brief study it would be neither feasible nor desirable to mention all these episodes. Only the most important and the most famous of them, therefore, will be highlighted with now and then a glance at some other, more arbitrarily selected, episodes which seem worthy of comment.

Let us call the roll of names which, in the first books, awaken in the Iranian nation memories of their early moments of trial and glory: King Jamshid and the monster Zahhak; the doughty deeds and just judgements of King Faridun and King Manuchehr; the strange fate of Zal, whose foster father was the fabulous bird Simorgh (his real father having abandoned him at birth because he could not accept a new-born babe with a head of white hair); the advent of Rostam, an Iranian Hercules and Achilles rolled into one, as renowned for his magnanimity as for his sudden rages; Slyavosh who, unjustly accused by Sudaba, was to meet the same fate as Euripides' Hippolytus; Alexander the Great who, at his own desire, became Iranian, adopting the name Sekander; the reign of Nushirvan and the famous ministry of Bozorgmehr; the reign of Khosrow Parviz, and, finally, the calamitous reign of Yazdergerd which led to the fall of the Sassanian Shahs and a long foreign occupation.

Interspersed with the heroic episodes are delightful tales of courtly love (Zal and Rudaba, Bizhan and Manizha, Khosrow and Shirin) as well as passages evoking Zoroaster's austere doctrine and recalling readers to the similarly monotheistic Moslem faith.

One of the more paradoxical aspects of Ferdowsi's style is that it reconciles and makes play with the vigour

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Photo © Roman Ghirshman, Paris

The colossal statue of Shapur I in a grotto near Bijapur (south-west Iran) stands nearly 8 metres (26 ft.) high. Though damaged by a fall of rock, probably caused by an earthquake, this 3rd century A.D. sculpture still offers a majestic portrait of one of the most renowned Sassanian kings. A great builder and founder of cities, Shapur created Jundi-Shapur, near modern Ahwaz in south Persia. There he set up a hospital and medical school that became a famous 6th century university where Persian, Greek and Indian doctors met to elaborate medical laws and to discuss their work. Ferdowsi's "Book of Kings" describes Shapur as "guardian of the world and husbander of the wealth of great and humble alike."

A Sassanian royal hunt

Boars, stags, elephants, horses, camels, hunters, musicians, boatmen —a host of human and animal figures surges along the walls of the famous grotto at Taq-i Bostan in eastern Iran, forming one of the most majestic spectacles of rock-cut sculpture ever created by Iranian artists. These hunting scenes, imbued with vigour and vitality, were carved by Sassanian sculptors in a great grotto set in a sheer cliff face near Kermanshah, a town on the ancient Silk Road of Asia. On these and the following pages we present, almost in their entirety, the two hunting scenes cut in relief on the side walls of the grotto towards the end of the 5th century A.D. Below, the royal boar hunt. In the centre, standing in a boat, a Sassanian monarch, possibly King Khosroes II, lets fly an arrow at his quarry. Carcasses of the boars are shown loaded on the backs of elephants (left and lower left). Right, the royal stag hunt carved on the opposite side of the grotto. In this monumental work, the sculptor has depicted (top to bottom) the three phases of the hunt. Top centre, seated on his horse beneath a parasol, the king awaits the signal for the start of the chase. Musicians seated on a nearby dais play for him. Below, the king gallops in pursuit of the stags. Bottom, as the hunt ends, the king, quiver in hand, slows his horse to a trot.

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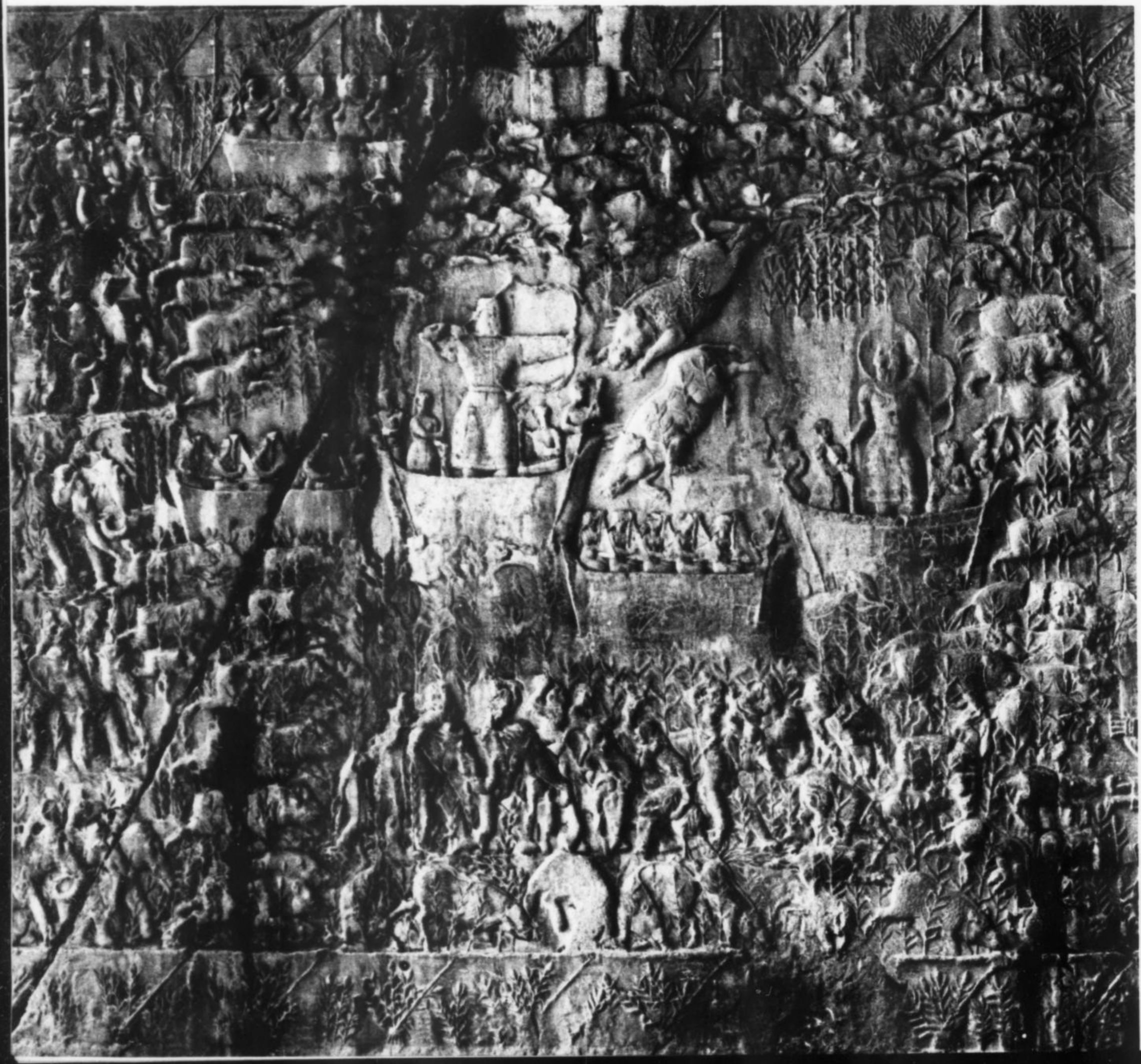
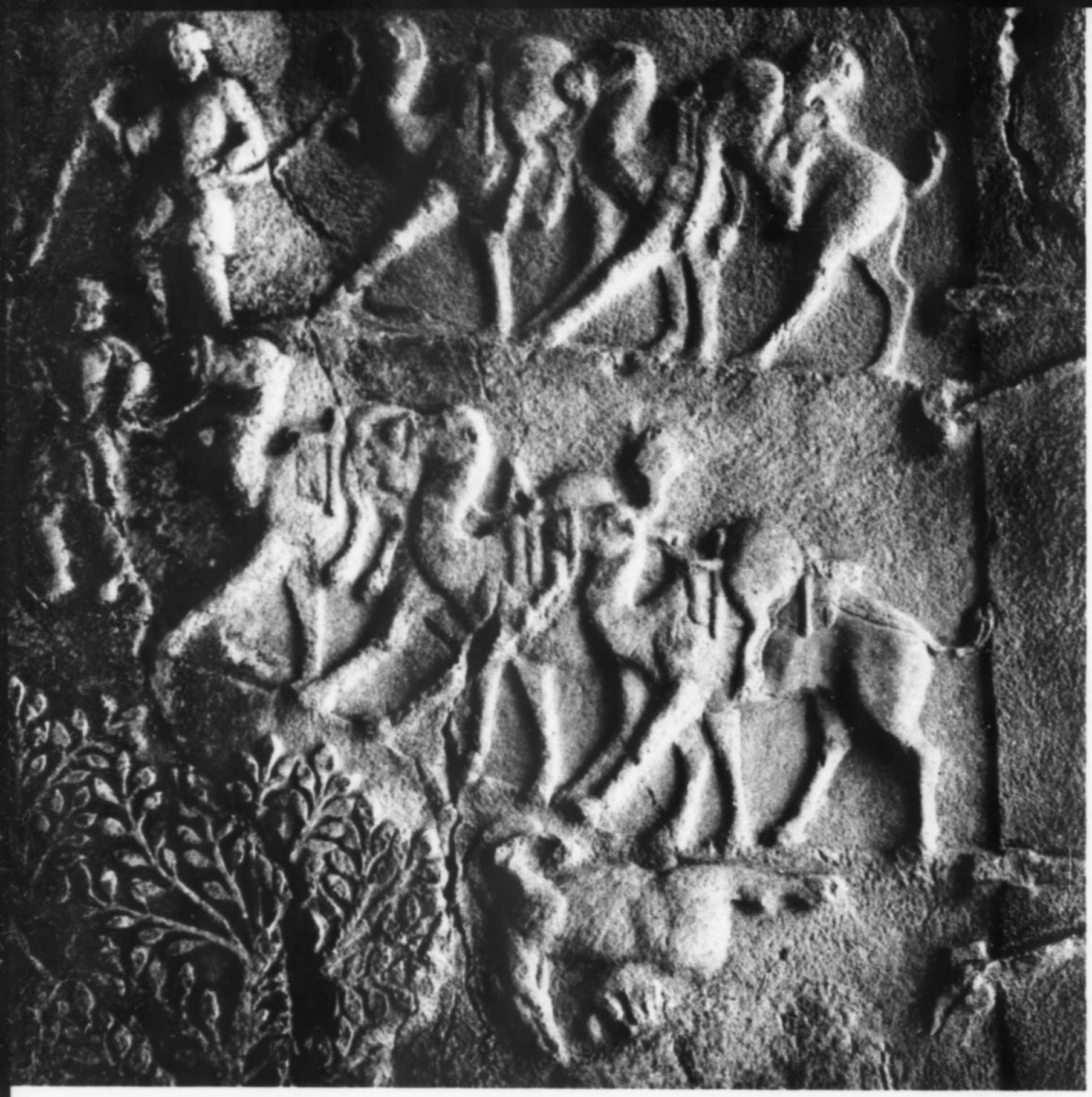


Photos Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier

ROYAL HUNT
(Continued)



Left, a train of camels carries away the stags bagged by the king during the hunt. This particular sculpture from the grotto of Taq-i Bostan is situated just beyond the section of the hunting scene shown on page 35.

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Photos Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier

Iran's 5th century artists were highly skilled sculptors of animal forms. Their feeling for the material they worked in and their ability to imbue every feature of their carvings with movement and narrative qualities is revealed in these details from the royal boar hunt (see also photo page 34). Left, boars stampede in headlong flight through the marshes. Above, pierced by arrows, a boar falls in front of the king's boat. Another boat, bottom right of detail, carries court musicians.

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XUM

Photo Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier

38

ROYAL HUNT
(Continued)

Another detail from the relief depicting the stag hunt. A puzzling aspect of this scene is the group of four figures that appear to be lying down in front of a line of realistically depicted advancing elephants. Viewed horizontally the figures are seen to be marching men. The significance of this detail has not been explained.

of the art of an earlier age and the more studied refinements of a civilization that has already reached its peak.

After noting the frequent recurrence of two themes, "the lament for the fallen kings and heroes and the description of sunrise", Reuben Levy, to whom we owe a translation of the *Shah-nama* (1), rightly points out that "the full range of poetic arts are brought into play so that no two sunrises are described in the same terms or in the same manner and no two laments are identical".

Ferdowsi also excels in his descriptions of the settings of these episodes, for example, the rock on which Simorgh's nest was "built so high that its topmost level touched the skies, for no toiling hand had built it, nor was it made of stones and earth". It is in this grandiose setting that Zal, abandoned by his father, becomes Simorgh's foster child, being suckled not on milk but on the blood of the fabled bird.

Ferdowsi is incomparable in his evocations of battles; at times he paints the scene in vivid colours, as in the capture of Salm's fortress: "... Twelve thousand men were killed and a pall of smoke hung heavy over the flames. The waves of the sea were black as pitch and the desert was a river of blood."

At times he conjures up the sounds of battle, combining them with visual impressions to create the effect of a Delacroix painting set to the music of Wagner: "... Such was the pounding of horses hooves and the dust raised by the armies that both the sun and the moon were eclipsed. The mist resounded to the clash of drums and the swords were sated with red blood... battleaxes pounded on golden shields and helmets till the heads beneath them reeled."

Ferdowsi's pictorial genius is as universal and as wide-ranging as that of a Rembrandt. He can turn from awe-inspiring scenes of war to portray with equal mastery the subtle tones of the countryside in all the seasons, and particularly in autumn.

Thus, for example, he puts these words into the mouth of King Bahram Gur, so often represented in Persian miniatures: "Now bring forth flowers, pomegranates, apples and quinces and let the golden beakers be never empty of wine. When I shall see the apple's cheek blush the colour of pomegranate, when the sky is spotted with clouds like a leopard's coat, when the camomile is fragrant and heavy with seed, when the wine is red as the cupbearer's cheek, when the air is mild, neither hot nor cold, the earth cool and the waters blue, when we have donned our autumn robes of fur, then must we go hunting by way of Djez."

IN the *Book of Kings*, Ferdowsi does not limit himself to descriptions of battles and the seasons; he also touches upon the great moral truths which he expresses with the same studied perfection as the epic or romantic episodes.

The Iranian tradition passed on by Ferdowsi affirms its divine origin, leading ever back towards God. Its message is the need to establish justice and spread civilization throughout a country freed from foreign domination.

For Ferdowsi, with his Iranian outlook, the monarchy was the perfect instrument and vehicle of this tradition. The *Book of Kings*, we sense, is not only an Iranian Iliad and Odyssey and the setting for the knightly romances of the first empire to be built on a truly world-wide scale (indeed, the first genuinely "modern" state in history); it also contains a treasury of wisdom and moral guidance, as well as a store of political precepts.

Intelligence, courage, strength and justice are not seen by Ferdowsi as being in opposition to each other, by reason of some "principle" of the separation of the virtues, but as being linked together in the living person of the King of Iran. Indeed, the *Shah-nama* is expressly conceived for the furtherance of royal education. Ferdowsi himself writes: "When you have written this book of kings, give it to the kings."

Young Iranians are taught at an early age a fine precept from the Epic, quoted by the poet Saadi in his *Bustan:* "Canst thou reconcile the fact of having received life with the act of taking the life of another? Harm not the ant toiling with his grain of wheat; he too has a life to live and even the ant's life is sweet, to the ant."

Ferdowsi's tender feelings for King Iraj can easily be sensed: "Since the earth shall be our bed and a brick our pillow, wherefore plant a tree today whose roots will be watered with blood, whose fruit will be vengeance so long as it stands?" He shows that Iraj's gentle nature is not without wisdom and foresight. Later, the King is murdered by his two jealous and resentful brothers, but he is revenged by his son who kills his two uncles in single combat.

Though Ferdowsi frequently calls into play the world of the fabulous, he makes no claim to have pierced the mysteries of life or indeed of the hereafter. The wisdom he propounds is imbued with an undeniable nobility and dignity, nor can he be accused of any lack of clarity or balance.

With aptly chosen metaphors the poet gracefully illustrates the austere ethic he wishes to impart: "Put not thy trust in the favour of Fate; it is not in the nature of a bow to be straight. Heaven revolves above us, now hiding from us the face she revealed before; treat her as thy foe and she smiles upon thee; call her thy friend and she averts her face. A word in thine ear, rid thy soul of love of this world."

One of the great and terrible lessons of the *Book of Kings* is its demonstration of how, with the fall of the Sassanians and the eclipse of Yazdegerd, the country's independence, language, civilization and well-being crumble.

Yet iran's destiny seems to be closely linked with the *Book of Kings*. With the passing of the centuries, as we have seen, new dynasties arise, restoring to the country her independence and language and enriching civilization as a whole.

In my view it is neither rash nor unrealistic to conclude that these successive "renewals" drew inspiration and vigour from the epic work of Firdowsi which highlights the great regal figures of Iranian history.

ONE of the book's opening passages describes how Husheng, one of the early kings: "built conduits and canals to carry the water and by his royal might soon brought this work to completion." King Husheng himself declares: "I have girt myself with justice and righteousness according to the command of God who ordaineth victory." To this Ferdowsi adds: "From that time on he set to civilizing the world and to spreading justice to every corner of the earth."

King Faridun's character resembles that of the civilizing and justice-loving Husheng. Like those he took as his models and those who later were to mould themselves on him, this king of kings is a just king: "Whoever shall maltreat a poor man, become arrogant because of his riches or persecute the wretched, him shall I deem an infidel more wicked than Ahriman."

Today paintings of the heroes of the *Book of Kings*—Rostam, Siyavosh, Iraj, Bahram Gur the hunter—adorn the café walls in every town and village of Iran. In the Zour Khaneh (gymnasia), in which for centuries sport has been considered as both a physical and a moral discipline, Ferdowsi still has a wide popular audience as the athletes exercise to the rhythm of his poems chanted by their instructors.

That Ferdowsí speaks to an ever-growing audience can only be a matter of satisfaction. This legacy of moral grandeur, undying wisdom and literary brilliance constitutes an invaluable offering to mankind from the Iranian genius. ■

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(1) Reuben Levy, who died in 1966, was professor of Persian at Cambridge University. His translation has appeared in the Persian Heritage Series of the Unesco Collection of Representative Works under the title "The Epic of the Kings" (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, and Chicago University Press, 1967).

Drawing © Editions Garnier-Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS
OR The secret of Scheherazade

by Michel Léturmy

Vivid images of Islamic customs and life in medieval times emerge from the pages of "The Thousand and One Nights", in stories that often evoke settings as enchanting as this courtyard of the Royal mosque in Isfahan (below). Left, drawing by the 19th century French artist, Paul Gavarni, for the tale of the Magic Horse.

Photo © Henri Stierlin, Geneva

"IN this strange world," said Bernard Shaw, "you never can tell!" When a genie materializes from a bottle and accuses someone of killing his son... Well, that's what fairy tales are made of. But when a young girl named Scheherazade tells the Sultan the story of a genie who materialized from a bottle and accused someone of killing his son..., that's no longer a fairy tale, for if Scheherazade falters in her story, or if the Sultan so much as yawns, she will lose her life.

No, you never can tell! When someone tells you that Scheherazade saved her neck and halted a massacre by telling the Sultan the story of a genie who materialized from a bottle... that's make believe! But when, about the year 1700, Antoine Galland discovered that behind the seven Arabian tales he was publishing there lay a thousand and one nights of tales and a Scheherazade to tell them, he realized that this wasn't make believe at all, and that he had just discovered a new world. Can one ever really tell how things will turn out?

Indeed one can't! Galland, for instance, thought he had reached the Arab world, yet, without knowing it, he had stumbled across Iran.

Even a great orientalist, then, could be taken in by a remarkably well-assimilated Arabic-speaking, Moslem Scheherazade, decked out in Arab garb. The names, Scheherazade and Shahriyar, to be sure, were Iranian, but perhaps they had been introduced just to lend a touch of the exotic.

The language may not have been the purest Arabic, yet it was indeed Arabic, of that Galland was sure. Nor was Islam pictured in very orthodox terms: there were genies, fairies and talismans—what we would call "magic", but what our grandmothers had quite simply called "marvels".

Were *A Thousand and One Nights*, in fact, Arab tales? Antoine Galland himself might have been bewitched! The sceptical orientalists who came after him put Scheherazade to the ordeal of a historical and textual inquisition. Name? First name? Parents' date and place of birth? Like so many police detectives they "grilled" the ancient chroniclers.

Here, for example, is what Mas'udi, a tenth century Arab historiographer, wrote in a passage of his *Golden Prairies* in which he cited the works of fiction translated from Persian: "The book entitled in Persian *Hezar Efzaneh* (A Thousand Tales) belongs to this category of works; it is better known to the (Arab) public under the name *A Thousand and One Nights*. It is the story of a king and his vizier, and of the vizier's daughter and a slave who are called Shirazad and Dinazad." Notice that Mas'udi wrote "entitled in Persian."

At about the same time (10th century), another Arab, Ibn al-Nadim, was compiling a bibliography in which he stated: "Mohammed ibn Abdus, author of the *Book of the Viziers*, had begun a collection of a thousand tales borrowed from the Arabs, the Persians and the Greeks. He sent for the authors and took his pick of the best they had to offer; at the same time, he was taking extracts from books of narratives and tales. In this way he put together 480 nights, each one containing a complete story of approximately fifty pages. He died before he could complete his thousand tales."

STARTING with these statements, orientalists were able to trace the history of *A Thousand and One Nights* a little more closely. It is thought that the Persian *Thousand Tales* that Mas'udi mentions were translated into Arabic during the 8th century and were first entitled *A Thousand Nights*. It is also believed that some Arab tales were added in the 9th century and that by the 16th century the collection was in its definitive form, perhaps as a result of the Mameluke conquest of Syria and the conquest of Egypt by Selim I. This might also explain why, finally, the *Thousand and One Nights* settled down in Cairo where they multiplied and lived happily ever after.

There remained the task of making a critical examination of the book to find out whether it bore any traces of its wanderings across boundaries and through time. Basically four groups of tales can be distinguished: a group of Indian origin, a narrative cycle connected with Baghdad, another which came to be referred to as the cycle of sea tales, and a final group formed in Cairo.

In the Indian group the genie is king. But the genies in these tales are Moslem (faithful servants or harmful spirits), who were mastered and converted long after the tales about them were first told. Metamorphoses into stones and beasts are commonplace and animals speak. Yet though these miraculous changes are wrought, of course, in the name of Allah and according to his will, one cannot help but see in them watered down versions of more ancient metempsychoses.

In the tales of the second group the fabulous gives way to the romantic; they are tales of intrigue, love or manners. We walk the streets of Baghdad, by day and by night, in the company of the famous 9th century Caliph Haroun al-Raschid; and if magical ploys from India are introduced, this is only done to help the plot along.

The story of *Sinbad the Sailor* clearly belongs in the sea cycle. His *Voyages* have often been published separately (Galland had translated them before he discovered *A Thousand and One Nights.)* But their characteristics can be found in many other tales.

"The wonder springs from an inextricable mixture of true and false. It is the saga of the first navigators to use the compass, the gnomon and the astrolabe, the odyssey of those who, after reading Pliny and Strabo, finally discovered the lamas of Tibet and the white whales," writes Nadjim oud-Dine Bammate in his study *Themes and Rhythms of A Thousand and One Nights.*

The Cairo group, with its mixture of ancient and modern tales, is more difficult to identify. At times the fabulous seems to exceed all bounds; at times it gives way completely to satire and the picaresque. Thus, the fabulous dominates the account of Sinbad's seventh voyage, as revised and corrected by the Egyptian story-teller.

Altogether, the investigation of the text had got off to a bad start. It is difficult to see how this investigation, which talks of India, Iraq and Egypt (having missed out Iran entirely) can be reconciled with the testimony of the old chroniclers who maintained that *A Thousand and One Nights* came to us from Iran.

But the wonder of *A Thousand and One Nights* lies not so much in the imaginativeness and the charm of the tales, but in nature of the book itself which was able to reunite and make into a whole tales from so many different sources. And Iran gave us the story-teller, the young Scheherazade, without whom none of this could have existed.

Thus if we were to attempt—may Scheherazade pardon us—to make an orderly summary, we might say that India and the Arab empire furnished the material (fabulous myth and comedy of manners), into which Islam breathed the spirit.

But nothing would have been created from these two elements had not Iran embodied them in the only literary form in which they could meet and live. The spotlight falls on Scheherazade, daughter of Iran, and on her own story, into which could be assimilated everything moving, sad, funny, astonishing that the world had to offer. The story of *A Thousand and One Nights* is the story of Scheherazade herself.

"Once upon a time, long, long ago...

Shahzenan, king of Samarkand and

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

MICHEL LETURMY *has made a speciality of the great literature of the Orient. He is the author of an edition of the Arabian Nights as Told to Children ("Les Mille et Une Nuits Racontées aux Enfants", 1958) and of the Club Français du Livre's Special Edition of "Les Mille et Une Nuits" (The Thousand and One Nights) with Notes and Introduction, (1956). His "Dieux, Héros et Mythes" (Gods, Heroes and Myths) deals with the mythologies of different peoples and cultures, including those of Iran. He is the co-author (with Prof. M. Hamidullah) of a translation of the Koran, republished this year, and (with J. Grosjean) of a new translation of the Greek New Testament (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Ed. Gallimard, Paris, 1971.)*

XUM

ALADDIN AND THE WONDERFUL LAMP

Aladdin, Ali Baba and Sindbad the Sailor are among the most popular heroes of the tales in "The Thousand and One Nights", tales which appeal alike to children and grown-ups the world over. Here, tne famous puppets of Sergei Obraztsov at the Moscow Puppet Theatre enact two scenes from Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp. Above, from right, Aladdin, his fiancee, his mother, the astrologer and the sultan. Below, Princess Boudour. After many adventures, Aladdin wins her hand.

Photos © APN - Sergei Obraztsov Theatr Moscow

Upper Tartary, was invited to the palace of his brother Shahriyar, king of India and China. He had scarcely left the city when he realized he had forgotten one of the gifts he had prepared for his brother. Returning unexpectedly to the palace, he came upon his wife asleep in the arms of her lover. He killed them both and returned to the caravan. But by the time he reached his brother's palace, he was wasted away by the grief that tormented him. This continued until one day he saw Shahriyar's wife giving herself up to debauchery with her maids and slaves.

The two brothers learned a lesson from their misfortune and left the city, determined to withdraw from the world. But when they reached the coast, they met a genie who made a very beautiful young girl appear from a glass casket. No sooner had the genie fallen asleep than the girl granted them her favours, adding their two rings to the ninety-eight she had received from other lovers. Shahriyar, deciding that the genie was even unhappier than he, returned to the capital to take revenge, not only on the queen, but also on all women. He would marry a different one each night and have her put to death the next morning.

The decree was carried out and the whole city mourned. But nothing, not even so much bloodshed, could assuage the Sultan's thirst for vengeance. At this point Scheherazade, the vizier's daughter, decided to put an end to the massacre. So she said to the vizier: "O my father, I have a favour to ask of you." When the vizier replied that he would grant any reasonable request, Scheherazade declared: "I have decided to put a stop to the king's barbarity which weighs so heavily upon the city. In the name of Allah, arrange for my marriage to him."

Aghast, the vizier replied: "Allah be with you, have you lost your senses-" "No", replied Scheherazade, "for if I die, my death will be a ransom for the others; if I succeed I shall have performed a great service to my city. You must grant me this boon".

Scheherazade also obtained the Sultan's permission to bring with her her younger sister, Dinarzade, who at the approach of dawn would say "O my sister, if you are still awake, tell us one of those delightful stories you know, for this is perhaps the last time that I shall be able to enjoy that pleasure." This "last time" was to be renewed night after night a thousand and one times, thanks to the talent of the story-teller and her cunning in breaking off her narrative at the most exciting moment.

On the thousand and first night, the Sultan granted Scheherazade permission to bring before him the three male children she had borne him. One was walking, one crawling, and the third was still a babe in arms. Placing them before the king she said, "O king of the century, here are your children. I ask you to spare me because of these little ones, for if you kill me they will be motherless and no other woman will be able to raise them."

Hearing these words the king wept. Pressing the children to his breast he said, "O Scheherazade, by Allah I pardoned you even before the children came, because I saw that you were chaste and pure, intelligent and pious."

Thus Scheherazade emerged from her duel with death not only alive but triumphant. For though, for a thousand and one nights, she is lost to our sight behind the skilful smoke-screen of her narrative, we can never forget that all the time she is but a story's-length from death.

SINCE Shahriyar's day, millions of men, anxious to know the meaning of life, have been enchanted. The story of Scheherazade was only just beginning. Good-hearted, but not overconcerned about acknowledging her sources, she refused no invitations, inspiring the Mongol tales, *A Thousand and One Evenings*, the Peruvian *A Thousand and One Hours*, the Tartar stories, *A Thousand and One Quarter Hours*, and the Syrian tales, *Five Hundred and a Half Mornings*.

She was patroness of many others, even in France; *A Thousand and One Favours* (1716), *A Thousand and One Platitudes* (1742), *A Thousand and One Follies* (1785). At about the same time, in response to more pressing invitations, she founded a whole collection, *Le Cabinet des Fées*, which included Cazotte and Chavis' *Evenings of Sultan Shahriyar*. Meanwhile Crébillon the younger wrote his *Sopha* in which he claimed to depict the spinelessness of the "grandson of that magnanimous Shahriyar".

To Godefroy Demombynes she revealed a Berber version of *A Thousand and One Nights* and sent for a certain dervish from Isfahan to relate to Pétis le Croix the story of *A Thousand and One Days*.

Diderot found himself writing *Les Bijoux Indiscrets;* Voltaire set his *Zadig* "at the time when the Arabs and the Persians were beginning to write *A Thousand and One Nights*"; Montesquieu played at being a Persian and wrote his satirical *Lettres Persanes;* Théophile Gautier arranged an "Orient and Cairo", in Rue Le Peletier, where, dressed as a Persian, he had the *Thousand and Second Night* recited to him.

But by now Scheherazade was not to be satisfied with literature alone. From Rimsky-Korsakov she got a magnificent symphonic suite (1888) and a composition for voice and orchestra from Ravel (1903). With Diaghilev's help she conquered the *Ballets Russe* (1910); in May 1914 she was seen at the *Opéra Comique* where she presented *Marouf, the Cobbler of*

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A THOUSAND AND ONE 'FIRST NIGHTS'

The tales of "The Thousand and One Nights", many of which came from 9th century Iran, are now part of the world's great heritage of folklore. In the past 20 years alone, translations of these masterpieces of story-telling have been made in 40 countries. Choreographers and musicians too have long been inspired by the enchanting tales. Above left, costume designed for the sultana in the Diaghilev Ballet Company's work, "Scheherazade", presented in Paris in 1910. Costumes and scenery for the ballet, set to the music of Rimsky-Korsakov, were designed by the Russian artist Leon Bakst. Right, illustration for a French translation of the "Nights" shows Aladdin's meeting with the magician. Centre, scene from one of Sindbad the Sailor's voyages, by the famous French book illustrator Gustave Doré.

Cairo. Later she broke into the cinema spawning countless screen Sinbads, Aladdins and Ali Babas.

There was a "Scheherazade mystery" and everyone tried to penetrate the secret.

For the most marvellous thing about the tale is not that Scheherazade held her brutish husband in breathless suspense for a thousand and one nights, nor that she managed to bend the will of a powerful potentate. The wonder is that we believe in it, and the story-teller, far from seeming out of place in our twentieth century, western world, succeeds in jolting us out of our epoch.

And therein lies part of her secret. Scheherazade could never have come down through the ages to us had she not been borne along by the world she revealed to us. And this world would not have borne her along had she not been the expression of its fullness and its rhythm. Scheherazade was invincible because she reflected, above all, a world in movement.

Here is how Nadjim-oud-Dine Bammate describes this world in his *Themes and Rhythms of a Thousand and One Nights*. "It is a world in which nothing is impossible, where each one of our actions has incalculable consequences, where objects have their own indomitable, mysterious life and are not in truth what they appear to be.

"The fisherman uncorks a bottle, but in so doing he frees a giant. The cook thinks that she is frying fish, but really she is summoning a fairy who breaks through the kitchen wall, magic bamboo wand in hand. The world is without causality, or rather it is subject to a series of trigger mechanisms, of actions and reactions, more profoundly secret than our causality, and whose meaning escapes us. The world is forever being turned upside-down.

"In *A Thousand and One Nights*, the capricious fantasy of events is balanced by the consistency of human types. The sultan, the sultana, the young princes and princesses, viziers, merchants, judges, saints, hamals, procuresses, fairies, shrewd merchants knights, barbers, navigators, brigands, astrologers, calligraphers and lovers all speak and act as their rôles demand.

THUS through the story-telling technique we begin to get an idea of the landscape in which Scheherazade moves, "a multi-faceted character", writes Bammate, "faithful to her legend, who finds herself thrown into a whirlpool of unpredictable events."

And this landscape is the panorama of life itself (a life created out of words). For if Scheherazade has the power to summon genies and fairies so that Camaralzaman can find the princess Boudour, only to lose her again, it is clear that there is no fixed boundary between life and story. Behind her back another story-teller is pulling the puppet strings and making up the tale that begins, "Once upon a time a young maiden named Scheherazade..."

Scheherazade was not born heroic; she decided to become a heroine only when this was the only choice open to her. That was her style and her secret. First of all, she knew how to choose the right moment. Not too early, not too late. It would have been reckless to start too early; first Shahriyar had to prove his inflexibility.

So Scheherazade counted the girls who fell—one a day—and every day calculated how many remained. She still had some leeway before her turn came—after all, she was a vizier's daughter. But she could not wait too long—until the knife was at her throat.

Instead she would go and confront the sultan. But how? This was her second stroke of genius; she realized she no more had a choice of means than she had of timing. Force was out of the question; she had no desire to die a martyr.

There remained one last way, the very one for which Scheherazade felt herself suited—strategy. Attract the enemy away from his familiar battlefield; draw the man into a woman's world; astonish him before he has time to recover and then immediately rouse his curiosity in such a way that he imagines he is still in command (I won't execute her until she's finished her story about the beggar).

Thus we learn from Scheherazade that everything is a matter of strategy, of humour and of language.

Is there anyone who has not sought, despite the thousand pitfalls life strews in his path, the lost treasure or the enchanted city that each one of us sets out to conquer? To find the treasure, to lift the spell that hangs over the city or over paradise, to risk everything on the voyage and, if possible, to remember the way back...

And if at times the legend lies quiescent, word of it roams the world, from *Genesis* and *Gilgamesh* to *Le Grand Meaulnes* by way of *The Holy Grail*. It wanders, more or less unsullied, awakening in passing in those with half an eye open, the deepest aspirations of mankind. Such is the message the *Nights* bring to us from Iran. ■

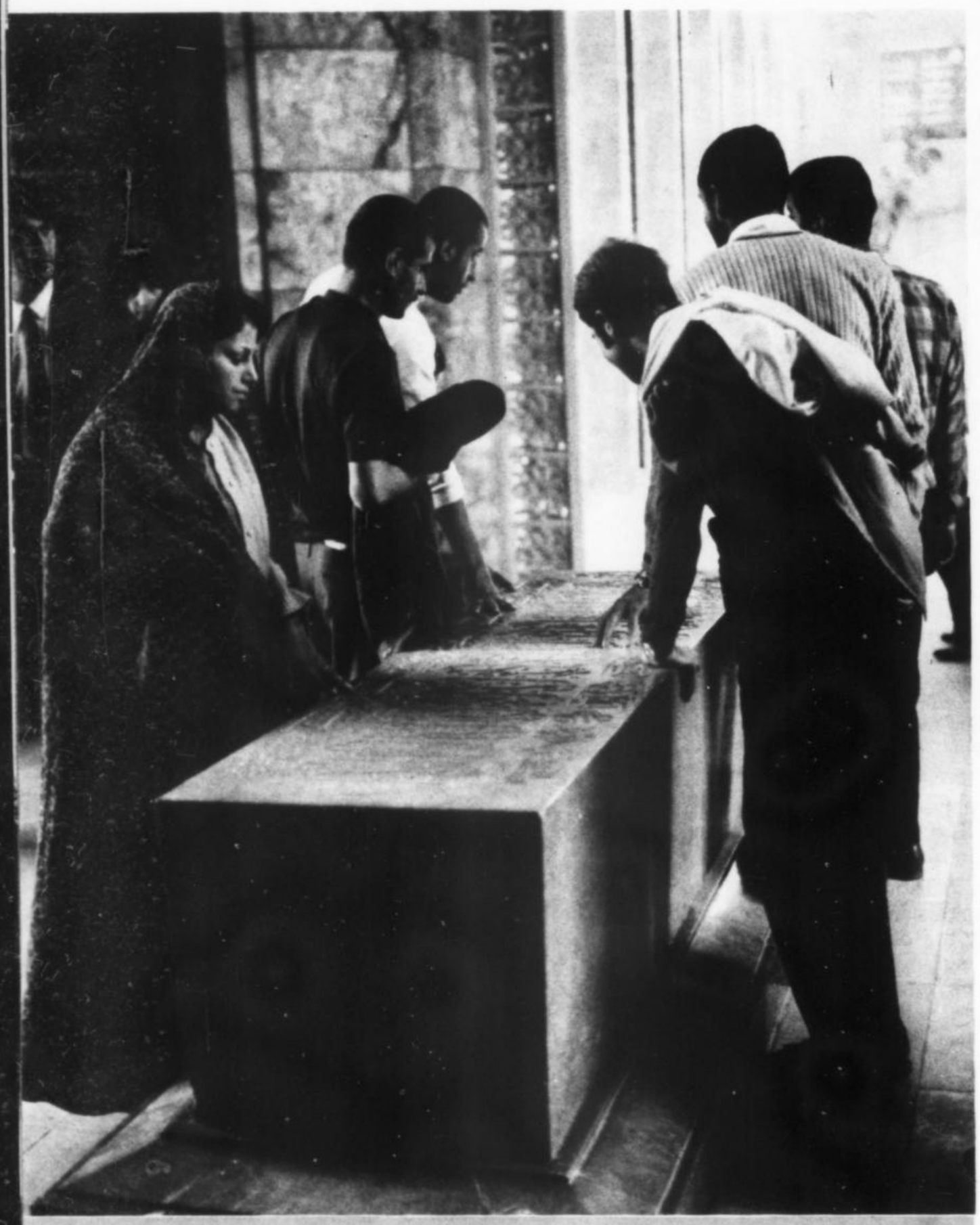

Photo Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier

FROM THE PEN OF HAFIZ. Above, the tomb of Hafiz, Iran's most admired lyric poet, at Shiraz—also his birthplace—is a centre of pilgrimage for the Iranian people. Shams ud Din Mohammed, **whose poetic name in Arabic, "Hafiz", means "One who knows the Koran by heart", was born sometime between 1317 and 1326 A.D. He was often called by Iranians "The Tongue of the Hidden" because of the sweetness and beauty of his lyrics. The poetic form which Hafiz brought to perfection was the** ghazal, **a work of 6 to 15 couplets linked by unity of thought and symbolism rather than by a logical sequence of ideas. The extraordinary popularity of his poetry in all Persian-speaking lands is to be found in his simple and often colloquial language, free from artificial virtuosity and his use of homely images and proverbial expressions. His wide appeal in the western world is shown by the fact that apart from several complete translations of his works, numerous translations of selections from his poems have been published (including 30 in England alone). Perhaps to Persian taste the best, and in its position the most apposite, of the poet's** ghazals **is that inscribed on his tomb. Its reads, in part, "Beside my tomb with wine and music seat yourself, /that sensing your fragrance I may rise from within the grave. /Arise, O figure sweetly moving, let me behold your stateliness, /that casting life and world aside I too may rise."**

AGELESS VOICES OF POETS & WRITERS

Persia has a literary tradition reaching back into the mists of early time. Yet Persian literature, as the term is generally understood, relates to works written in modern Persian, the language that emerged in the 9th century A.D. two centuries after the Moslem invasion of Persia. From then on, geographical, political and religious forces influenced the development and trends of Persian literature over the next centuries.

The earliest and most numerous examples of literary Persian are in verse, possibly because much of the early literature was improvised and the elements of meter and rhyme were aids to composition. Prose developed later, from the background of Arabic and pre-Islamic Persian writings, and ranged from early translations and narratives to books of counsel for court residents and historical works such as Juvaini's "History of the World Conqueror", one of two notable works produced during the Mongol period, the other being Rashid al-Dini's "Compendium of Histories".

However, the writers whom Iranians hold to be masters in the literary field are, with few exceptions, not historians or other authors of prose, but their classic poets: the epic writers, Ferdowsi (author of the "Shah-nama"—see page 32) and Nizami; the mystics, Sana'i and Attar; and the lyric writers, Sa'di and Hafiz of Shiraz. These are the names most often on their lips along with those of Maulavi Jalal al-Din Rumi and Mulla Jami.

Down the centuries Iran has left its literary—and linguistic—mark on an immense area, a map of which would take in the sub-continent of India and Pakistan, go far into China and south-east Asia and cover the western half of Asia. Today a rapidly developing country, Iran is meeting the thirst for knowledge with strenuous efforts to spread education. Yet the more modern side of education, with its emphasis on science, has by no means dulled the Iranian taste for poetry and *belles lettres* which are being produced as abundantly and read, or listened to, as eagerly as ever.

(See page 46, Unesco Translations — Persian Heritage Series.)

Two examples of early Iranian craftsmanship. Grey ceramic vase in the form of a woman (above) dates from 2000 B.C. It was unearthed from the Shah Tepe (tepe: hill or mound) in the plain of Gorgan near the Caspian Sea. Below, bone handle for a flint knife, depicting a man standing with arms crossed, carved over 6,000 years ago (4200 B.C.). Discovered at Tepe Siyalk (central Iran), it is 12.5 cm. (5 in.) long.

Craftsmanship of early Iran

Bronze statuette of a robed divinity unearthed at Pusht-i-Kuh in Luristan (western Iran). The inscription engraved on the skirt in Cuneiform characters dates from around 600 B.C., but the statue, 37 cm. (15 in.) high, may be older by several centuries.

Photo Paul Almasy - Unesco Courier

Photos © Archaeologia Viva, Paris

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UNESCO NEWSROOM

Symbol for International Book Year

Unesco has designated 1972 as International Book Year. Right, the world symbol for this occasion designed by the Belgian artist Michel Olyff. Twin figures with linked arms symbolize international co-operation through books and the major role of books in cultural and economic development. Main themes for International Book Year include the encouragement of authorship and translation, book production and distribution, library development and promotion of the reading habit. A Charter of the Book, now being drafted, sets down the treatment which books should be accorded, nationally and internationally, so

they can play their full part in education, development and mutual understanding.

UNESCO BOOKSHELF ON IRAN

UNESCO'S TRANSLATIONS SERIES

(In collaboration with The Persian Heritage Series, Royal Institute of Translation, Teheran)

■ **Muslim Saints and Mystics** by Farid al-Din Attar. Translated by A.J. Arberry. University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Routledge and Kegan Paul, London; University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1966, 287 pp.

■ **The Epic of the Kings (Shah-nama)** by Ferdowsi. Translated by Reuben Levy. University of Chicago Press, Chicago; Routledge and Kegan Paul, London; University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1967, 423 pp.

■ **The Letter of Tansar.** Translated by M. Boyce. Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, Rome, 1968

■ **History of the World Conqueror** by Juvaini. Translated by J.A. Boyle. Introduction by S. Runciman. Manchester University Press, Manchester; Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1958, 2 volumes, 763 pp.

■ **The Book of Government** or Rules for Kings by Nizami al-Mulk. Translated by H. Darke. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London; Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1960, 259 pp.

■ **Tales of the Marzuban** by Varavini. Translated by R. Levy. Thames and Hudson, London (out of print); Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. (out of print); Available from Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn., 1959, 254 pp.

■ **Tales from the Masnavi** by Jalal al-Din Rumi. Translated by A.J. Arberry. Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1961, 200 pp. (out of print)

■ **More Tales from the Masnavi** by Jalal al-Din Rumi. Translated by A.J. Arberry. Allen and Unwin, 1963, 252 pp.

■ **Mystical Poems of Rumi** (First selection, Poems 1-200). Translated by A.J. Arberry. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1968, 203 pp.

■ **The Nasirean Ethics** by Nasir ad-Din Tusi. Translated by G.M. Wickens. Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London (original edition out of print; available from Orientalia, New York), 1964, 352 pp.

UNESCO INTRODUCTIONS TO ASIAN LITERATURES

■ **An Introduction to Persian Literature** by Reuben Levy. Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1969, 194 pp.

UNESCO POCKET ART SERIES (Paperback)

Persian Miniatures from Ancient Manuscripts, Fontana Books, Collins Publishers, London; Mentor-Unesco, the New American Library, New York; large format album of colour reproductions "Iran, Persian Miniatures - Imperial Library", published in Unesco World Art series (out of print)

UNESCO'S ART SLIDES COLLECTION

Persian Miniatures. Set of 30 colour transparencies with trilingual, English-French-Spanish, texts, Editions Publications Filmées d'Art et d'Histoire, Paris

UNESCO RECORD SERIES "MUSICAL SOURCES"

"Iranian Modes" (6586 005) issued by Philips for the International Music Council (see item this page)

A FEW OTHER BOOKS ON IRAN

The Persians (A. Bausani). Translated by J.B. Donne. Elek Books Ltd., London, 1971

The Legacy of Persia (C. Elgood), 1963

The Heritage of Persia (R.N. Frye), London, 1962

Iran from the Earliest Times to the Islamic Conquest (R. Ghirshman), Penguin Books, London, 1954

A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present (A.U. Pope) (14 vols) Oxford University Press, 1964

Modern Iran (P. Avery), 1965

Iran: Past and Present (D.N. Wilber), Princeton University Press, U.S.A., 1958

Light me a Candle (Rita Wiesinger-Ferris). Experiences of a young Indian Unesco specialist in women's education, in the fight against illiteracy in south-west Iran. Shakuntala Publishing House, Bombay

Literacy prizes reward Burma and Zambia efforts

Two annual prizes for outstanding work in literacy teaching were presented at Unesco's H.Q., during ceremonies marking International Literacy Day on Sept. 8. The Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Prize, donated by the Shahinshah of Iran, went to Zambia's Central Literacy Supervisory and Co-ordinating Committee for the campaigns it has carried out since 1969. The Nadezhda K. Krupskaya Prize, awarded by the U.S.S.R., was won by the Zambia Adult Literacy Programme for its efforts during the past seven years. Winners were chosen by an International Committee meeting in Moscow, which made three additional commendations for each prize. For the Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Prize, mentions went to an Indonesian campaign, a U.S. voluntary organization and a Jamaican women literacy organizer. For the Nadezhada Krupskaya Prize, commendations were given to the Organization of the Angolan Woman, the Literacy Section of the Kuwait Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts of the Dominican Republic.

Unesco records of world's music

The first eight records in a new "Unesco Series" of world music have just been issued under the Philips' label. They present music from Java, Cambodia, India, Israel, Tibet, Iran, and Bali and Arabian Maquam music. Produced in the Netherlands for the International Music Council, under the general editorship of Alain Danielou, the series, entitled "Musical Sources", will comprise 40 records and is sponsored by Unesco.

Gandhi, 'world hero' number one

Mahatma Gandhi emerges as the most admired and respected world figure of all time according to the results of a World Community Heroes Competition organized by the University of London Institute of Education, with aid from Unesco and other organizations. The aim was to focus attention on the need for a greater sense of world community and how education can help foster it. Over 3,000 teachers and student-teachers in 37 countries participated.

Over $1 million raised for Palestine refugee schools

Over $1 million have been raised for UNRWA—the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees—to support the joint UNRWA-Unesco education programme for refugee children. Announcing this recently, Unesco's Director-General, Mr René Maheu, paid tribute to the efforts of Ambassador Mansour Khalid, Sudan's chief representative to the U.N., who has carried out a global fund-raising mission as Mr Maheu's representative. Extra funds are needed to offset a threatened $5 million deficit in the refugee programme.

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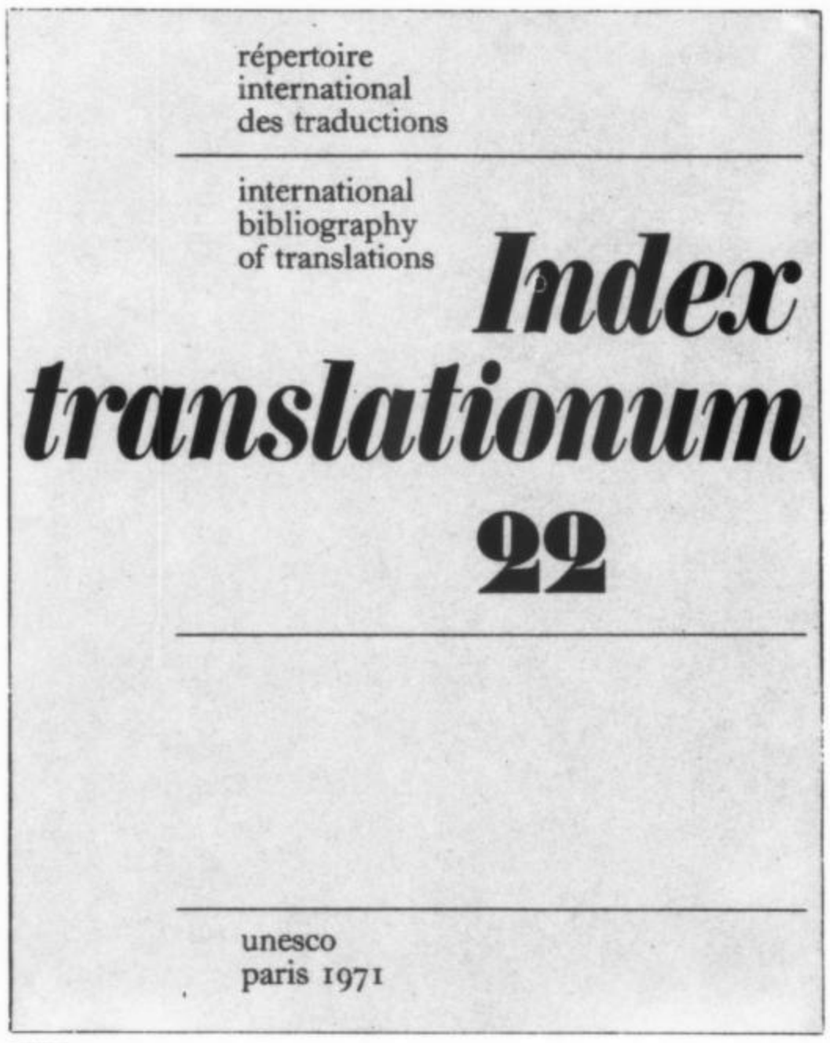

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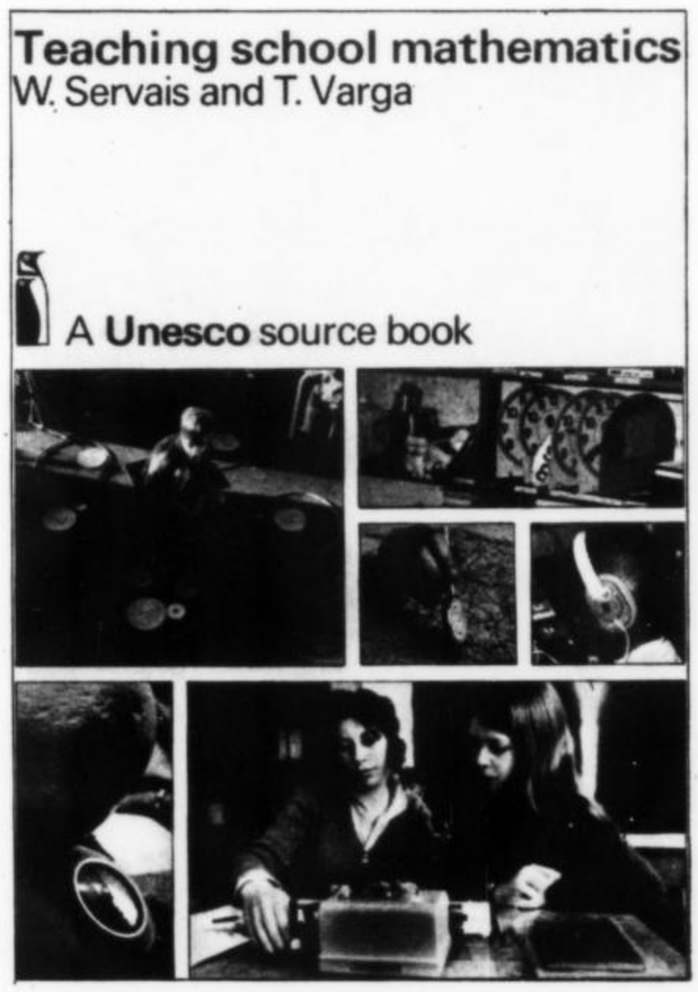

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